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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

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**Vol. 8**

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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 8

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Number 6

## *American Literature and the Democratic Tradition*

HOWARD FAST<sup>1</sup>

IT SEEMS to me that in our approach to many problems today we fail to survey the picture as a whole. It is that sort of piecemeal thinking that sees American literature apart from the whole long and unique struggle for democracy here. That sort of thinking leads a critic to group—as many have—a book like *Moby Dick* with *War and Peace*, or with *The Red and the Black* of Stendahl, as if a novel came into being through some sort of virgin birth and, by virtue of its classification, bears relationship to other novels, whether of a different culture or a different continent, but bears little or unimportant relationship to the society and the people of which it tells. Such critics speak of the tradition of the novel or the poem apart from the tradition of the people themselves; and, inhabiting a bookish world, taking pride in the very term "bookish"—a precious and medieval term, indeed—they see books making other books, a veritable deuterio-existence, wherein there is evolution from one printed page to another rather than through the people and the struggles of the people to a literature.

<sup>1</sup> Author of *The Frontier*, *Freedom Road*, *Citizen Tom Paine*, etc.

I would see it another way; I would see American literature coming out of the American struggle. Of course, there are European influences, and at certain points these influences were completely dominant, but the central factor of American literature is America. And thereby all of the many trends, influences, moods, emotions, struggles, and triumphs that cut through the history of our land also cut through the literature of our land.

By no means is this a country of unadulterated or pure democracy—and anyone who lives by such illusions need not go back to our history but need only look around at the national scene today. It is no land of full democracy that breeds the murderous lynching and race hatred of the South, the chauvinism of the North, the fascism and call to terror of American Action, the frenetic anti-labor crusades, the flouting of the people's will and needs in pricing and housing—these and a hundred more things.

American democracy is not a thing achieved but rather a thing in motion, a condition resulting from the many-sided dialectics of our society. Very early in our history, one of our leaders said that

constant vigilance is the price of freedom. That would not have been the case, then or now, if there were not strong and important forces here that oppose democracy, have only contempt for it, and work untiringly to destroy it. Yet, the important fact is that until now they have failed.

So one cannot say that the democratic tradition is the only tradition in our literature. There are many threads—destructive, nihilistic, feudal—but one clear fact does emerge. Never do these other trends really gain the ascendancy; never do they produce a truly lasting product. Without doubt, the main literary factor is the democratic tradition, or, to put it another way, the struggle for progress. And not a general struggle, but the struggle within the American frame—our struggle.

Again, it seems to me that only by looking at our literature in terms of this struggle, not in terms of the literature of other lands, can we arrive at an estimate that will allow us understanding instead of the vulgar philistinism into which such critics as Mencken, George Jean Nathan, and others have lapsed.

Such a perspective will also enable us to see our literature in terms of the forces which created it and the purpose it served and still serves. I become very impatient with people who say that America never produced a Tolstoy, a Cervantes, a Fielding, a Stendahl—as if only in such terms might we achieve fruition. The same people speak of the sweeping retrospect, the great canvas, laying down these forms as the eternal blueprint for the novel. But it is, curiously enough, these very same folk who are so ready to hail *Anthony Adverse* or some other mountain of trash as the fine peak of our intellectual achievement.

It would be unfair, however, to say

that no critic has been capable of this dialectic-historical approach. Parrington, in his monumental work, has taken good advantage of this point of view, as have certain others. But even Parrington, when he passed into the twentieth century, lost this perspective. Today his estimate of Cabell, for example, reads with almost total lack of meaning, that is, meaning in terms of the present—which is always the test of a historical viewpoint.

My own purpose here is to see whether, with an understanding of the main trend in our literature, we cannot comprehend the state of affairs today—and see why so many thoughtful persons have come to the conclusion that our miserable literary output is merely another evidence of a dying culture.

There are, as you well know, many approaches toward our literature. Parrington, for example, divides the body of our literature into three groupings, which he calls "The Colonial Mind," "The Romantic Revolution," and "The Beginnings of Critical Realism." With this, he leads us to 1920—and, if there were a fourth period to be included, he might well have termed it the period of "Sentimental Dissolution."

But these separations are entirely arbitrary. Our history—a very short one—is a whole, and our literature cannot be divided into separate periods any more than our history can. It is all very well for the interior decorator to give names to his furniture, but such a practice in the interconnected stream of life can lead only to confusion; a good book is not a chair or a piece of drapery. How, then, shall we regard our literature, if not as a reflection of the main forces? And if these forces are continuous and understandable, so is our literature.

These American forces did not coa-

lesce, however, in terms of an indigenous literature until the struggle for democracy reached titanic proportions—a point which was marked by the bloody, life-and-death contest to preserve the Union and to free four million Negro slaves.

Prior to the Civil War, although our literature frequently reflects an American scene, there is nothing uniquely American about the form, and often the same holds true of the content. Even though agrarian democracy and Christian utopian socialism are major threads running from Paine, Franklin, Jefferson, and Freneau to Emerson and Melville and Stowe, one never has an overwhelming sense of an American condition. Although Washington Irving's tales had such a wealth of Colonial color in them, their flavor is the Old World, and the affertaste is of a sunny land we never knew or could hope to know. Poe frankly created a world that existed nowhere, and Hawthorne's somber New England, with its regal colors and dimly realized moods, was never peopled by folk we could recognize. Even the majestic tale of *Moby Dick*, the white whale, was of no special American condition; and when an American condition did produce the whole of a story, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the characters were silhouettes rather than three-dimensional natives, even as were the leatherstocking heroes of Cooper's inept romances.

One cannot explain this away by pointing to a lack of realism; one must rather inquire as to why the method we call realism—and it could better have another appellation—was not employed. For, with the advent of such writers as Samuel Clemens and Bret Harte, the American condition is unmistakably evident, but these men were certainly not realists. The explanation, I think, is to be

found in the developing economy of the United States. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, we were beyond dispute an agrarian land. It would, of course, be childish to say that an agrarian land is incapable of the greatest literature. Russia, France, and England, in their agrarian periods, have proved otherwise, but under a different set of stimuli. There were no major illusions in these lands at their periods of greatest productivity, while our illusion—the illusion of a utopian democracy—had to be shattered in the most violent blood bath the world had seen up to that point—the War between the States.

There is an enormously static quality in the very early American literature. Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville—to take four examples—live in a changeless world. It is no accident that Hawthorne, so early in our history, is so completely steeped in the past—and Irving, too. It is no accident that Ahab battled, not an alien enemy, not an exploiter, not a tyrant, but the devil within himself. Nor is it an accident that the leatherstocking men were never motivated by a sense of what the West meant, even in terms of Jeffersonian democracy, or what it was to mean. It was a fruitful land they occupied, a land content with itself. The working class was just a germ of something still aborning; the militant minority of Abolitionists had not yet a mass following, and respectable people of antecedents did not move westward. Both the Jeffersonian and the Jacksonian revolts were mainly agrarian movements, and the lofty principles of the Revolution—for all the awful contradiction of four million slaves—were accepted as the outline of peace and prosperity forever.

Then, like a storm bursting, America changed, and the old, golden dream, the hazy memory that George Inness ex-

pressed so well in paint, was shattered, never to emerge again. With gold in California, the West opened. The wheels of machines turned, and the contradiction of the South exploded into civil war.

Out of these struggles, a literature was born—a literature that rose and fell like a barometer measuring these struggles. The minor injustices which were the topics of the literary indignation of the past became themes of major tragedy in the industrial era. The working class organized and struggled like a half-born giant for its very life. Small business became big business—and big business became monopoly. America came of age and took her place in the world scene.

This brief—and somewhat superficial—survey is only an indication of a theme that needs far more development. But at least it gives us a scientific approach, and we need not blunder in mystical groping after the soul of a culture. The soul of a culture is contained in the struggles and aspirations of a people—let us not forget that.

Mark Twain was never more superb or more American than in *Huckleberry Finn*. But, whatever else *Huckleberry Finn* is, its major theme is a cry for social justice, a tirade against ignorance, persecution, and superstition. This is something new on the scene, a writer who draws his content and strength out of man's struggle for social and economic freedom. Here, too, at about the same time, is Whitman, bursting like a thunderbolt, abandoning the Greek urns for the seething caldron of millions of human souls.

Such people as these two are the center of the ferment, but even on the fringes are a group of lesser talents, working at a tangent, but still influenced.

A graph can be drawn: A tide of vigor on the victory of the Civil War, the hope

of Reconstruction, the opening of the West. Then a seeming vacuum. Then a new development on the basis of the economic class struggle. As the turn of the century comes, a whole literature arises out of the young socialist movement. Here is Jack London, shocking the world awake. Here is the young Upton Sinclair, Frank Norris, and Vachel Lindsay, writing his poetry from native rhythms, printing them himself, and hawking them in front of factories. Out of a blend of Christian socialism, populism, and Ingersolism comes an Edgar Lee Masters and his *Spoon River Anthology*. And in *Poor White*, a great but neglected novel, Sherwood Anderson attempts to understand and diagram the forces that produce a Henry Ford or a Thomas Edison. And, at last, Dreiser, ponderously, tortuously, filled with an aching love and hurt, begins his mighty saga of twentieth-century America.

All this is not an accident, any more than the cynical rebirth in the twenties is an accident. Sinclair Lewis and James Branch Cabell, dissimilar as they may seem, both attack Babbitry. But Lewis and Cabell are individuals cut off from any substantial mass base. World War I smashed the hope and organization of the American progressive movement, and the postwar intellectuals came from the war filled only with disillusionment and resentment, cynical and adrift. When you add Hemingway, Dos Passos, and others, you get manifestations of the same condition.

Recall that at the end of the twenties the critical prophets were once again consigning our literature to limbo. Yet in the thirties, spurred by the mighty struggles of the unemployed to exist, the unorganized to organize, of a whole people to overcome a profound depression, a new current was set in motion. We should not

be so fixed in our ideas as to demand that an analysis be proved by a hundred books as alike as peas in the pod. When a whirlpool is set up, the center will produce vastly different products than the fringes, yet all factors depend upon the motion for their form.

It was the left wing and its demand for a people's literature in the thirties that set the current in motion. Out of that current came Caldwell, Faulkner, Steinbeck, yes, even O'Hara with his fine and merciless *Appointment in Samarra*. Writers as different as Saroyan and MacLeish were set in motion because the people were in motion, each weaving his own thread from the common cord. And even the theater, that notorious, last bulwark of philistinism, vibrated to the common sound and had a brief but exciting flash of glory, as in the Theatre Union, the Group Theatre, and the W.P.A. Theatre.

Nor was it "realism." A people in motion do not produce so lifeless and false a product as "so-called" realism. This was a time when no writer could ignore the twelve million jobless, the undernourished, what President Roosevelt called "one-third of a nation," and—more than anything for that era—the rise of fascism against the silhouette of Republican Spain in torment.

What then of today—what of the forties and the fifties? What has become of our literature in this time when *Cass Timberlane* is hailed as a great novel, *Animal Farm* as a great satire, and an illiterate pile of drugstore excitement, *Forever Amber*, as a great romance? Where are the young poets, novelists, and playwrights? Where is the single work to express our involvement in the greatest drama mankind ever knew—the struggle against fascism?

Either this yields to understanding, or we must go along with those who hope-

lessly surrender both our democracy and the culture it has produced to the reactionaries and the native Fascists.

But, actually, the problem, while complex, is not beyond solution. Those who must produce in this decade, the young writers, were almost all involved in the war in one way or another. Most, by far, were in the armed forces. Others were in Information and similar services. They did not return disillusioned, as after the first war; only a very sick mind can still doubt the fate that Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito had planned for civilization. But, at the same time, they did not return to an America that held the people's needs in mind. After fighting a great war for world liberation, they see a group of conscienceless men, hands hot with the atomic bomb, planning the next war. They see profits beyond the wildest dreams of the thirties being gouged out of the people, and they see the people in a state of apathy. And they, the veterans, have no homes and at the same time face a wildcat inflation.

How, then, could you ask, in this situation, for the kind of direction needed to produce literature? As I said at the very beginning, good books do not arise from other books. They arise only from life—and here in America, historically and constantly, they arose from the democratic tradition that marked each stage of the people's battle for freedom and a better life. As Carl Sandburg said:

The Human race in misery snarls,  
The writing becomes a mob,  
The mob is the beginning of something,  
Perhaps the mournful beginning  
Of a march out of darkness  
Into a lesser darkness  
And so on until  
The domes of smooth shadows  
Space themselves in tall triangles  
And nations exchange oleanders  
Instead of gas, loot and hot cargo.

Life is going on; as a very great Frenchman whom the Nazis murdered put it, "This is the youth of the world." We are on the brink of something stupendous, the atomic age, the time when man must live in peace or perish with all his achievements in war. More credit, then, that the young American writer has not retreated into a cynical disillusionment as meaningless as it is purposeless. That is more of a danger than that he might succumb to the evil blandishments of a Hearst or a McCormick—for the one is a cozening, whereas the other is overt.

This is a breathing space. The strong-

est body cannot run forever without resting. Without doubt, the greatest struggles lie ahead, and if the literature of today is given over to sex romances and detective stories, the literature of tomorrow will more than make up for the lapse. I have no doubt at all about that. With each new step toward social justice America took, we saw evidence of a literature on a new and higher level. The great American novels remain to be written—and, since life is always in motion, we may hope that the great American novels will always remain to be written.

## "The High Bid" and the Forbes-Robertsons

BABETTE MAY LEVY<sup>1</sup>

ONE OF Henry James's unpublished and but briefly produced plays, *The High Bid*, had a somewhat checkered career both in its genesis and in its long-delayed appearance on the stage and then met the ironic fate of being well received and praised by the most outstanding critics of the day but cut short in its presentation to the public. A study of the play<sup>2</sup> in its various phases of development from a one-act play to a substantial short story and, finally, to a three-act comedy of manners is, however, curiously revealing of its author's mind. Then, too, contemporary critical reaction to the play gives

some insight into the James cult during the lifetime of its inspirer.

In 1895 James made use of an idea that he had been considering for some time; the result was a longish one-act play that he called *Summersoft*, but usually referred to simply as *Mrs. Gracedew*, from the main character's name. Apparently, he had been given to understand that Ellen Terry would be interested in appearing in a fairly brief comedy of his writing. But all did not go smoothly: he scorned her suggestion that he should cut his lines so that the possible acting time of the play could be shortened by a half-hour, and then his anger is evident when she held the play for "three mortal years"<sup>3</sup> without attempting to give it a chance on the stage. In 1898, tired of having his play "preposterously treated"<sup>4</sup> in this fashion, he re-

<sup>1</sup> Department of English, Hunter College.

<sup>2</sup> For permission to read and to quote from the three-act play I am indebted to Mr. Henry James and to the Houghton Library, Harvard University. There are at Cambridge three typed copies of this play, including the one used in production by Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson; the latter copy shows the actor-manager's notes, changes, and elisions. For additional information concerning the production of the play (beyond that in printed sources) I am indebted to Lady Forbes-Robertson. And for the privilege of reading the earlier, one-act version I am indebted to Dr. Leon Edel, who is planning a complete edition of James's dramatic works.

<sup>3</sup> Henry James, letter to H. G. Wells, December 9, 1898, in *The Letters of Henry James*, selected and edited by Percy Lubbock (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1920), I, 306.

<sup>4</sup> Henry James, letter to Elizabeth Robins, October 31, 1899, in *Theatre and Friendship; Some*

wrote *Summersoft* (or *Mrs. Gracedew*) as a long short story, entitled *Covering End*, which appeared with *The Turn of the Screw* in the volume called *The Two Magics*.<sup>5</sup> *Summersoft* consists mainly of dialogue, with only the briefest stage directions. *Covering End*, while it tells the same story and follows the same dramatic pattern, describes not only the characters but also their varying emotions as the plot unfolds. Nor did James cut the dialogue; in fact, many scenes are longer and wordier in the short story than they had been in the original play. No sooner was his material transposed into story form and in print than he received "pressing requests"<sup>6</sup> from two actor-managers for the story to be turned into a play. James, gratified at this backhanded and tardy tribute to the original play, hopefully borrowed for them a copy of *Summersoft* from the only person in England who had one, Miss Elizabeth Robins. Curiously enough, he had kept no copy of his own; Ellen Terry was in America at the time and so her copy was unavailable. But both potential purchasers, George Alexander and Forbes-Robertson, after consideration declined to continue negotiations for the play. James, more confirmed than ever in his belief in the stupidity of actors, returned Miss Robins' copy to her. The latter was at this time closely connected with the New Century Theatre, an organization formed to put on worthy plays even if there was little hope of their being finan-

cially profitable. Through her interest in James's work William Archer, who acted as play-reader for the group, studied the play, pronounced it "a gem," and declared that, with only minor alterations, it ought to be "genuinely successful and popular."<sup>7</sup> But *Summersoft*, despite this praise from a critic of Archer's acknowledged standing, continued to languish unseen by the public; the idea of production by this theatrical group petered out.

It was not until 1907 that interest in the story and the possibility of its production flared up again. Circumstances surrounding this new opportunity for a stage presentation seemed to be remarkably auspicious.<sup>8</sup> While on tour with Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Forbes-Robertson happened to spend a few hours reading *Covering End*. By this time he had completely forgotten his earlier interest in having it transposed into play form, but, impressed especially by the story's natural and simple dialogue, he felt that he had discovered in the tale the foundation of a play worthy to be added to his repertoire. Forbes-Robertson, incidentally, was particularly sensitive to the values of James's writings, for the two men had much in common. James's appreciation of French life and culture is obvious; Forbes-Robertson had spent many of his youthful summers in France. Both men had more than a casual interest in art. Forbes-Robertson, as a matter of fact, had studied at the Royal Academy for four years and when he went on the stage continued to paint, doing many portraits. Both were naturally fascinated by the American character, even while trying to remain objective in their attitude; Forbes-Robertson could not hope to know America as did James, with his

*Henry James Letters*, with a commentary by Elizabeth Robins (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), p. 205.

<sup>5</sup> London: W. Heinemann, 1898.

<sup>6</sup> James, letter to Elizabeth Robins, November 5, 1899, in *Theatre and Friendship*, p. 208. Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson later had no recollection of this early interest in *Covering End*; his sister, Mrs. Buchanan, who was always on the lookout for material that her distinguished brother might put to use, may well have been the one to write to James.

<sup>7</sup> Robins, *Theatre and Friendship*, p. 211.

<sup>8</sup> For Forbes-Robertson's account of his relations with James, see the former's autobiography, *A Player under Three Reigns* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1925), pp. 246-50.

New York and New England background and his lasting family ties on this side of the Atlantic, but the actor-manager had enjoyed long and very successful tours through Canada and the United States, and he, too, had many American friends and connections through his American wife. The whole theme of this particular story—the vivid contrast of America's crude youth with England's cultural heritage and the way in which the New World's spirit and the Old World's tradition in the end supplement each other—could be appreciated by Forbes-Robertson. The plot, that of a vivacious and impulsive American woman's falling in love with a gracious English house and then with its owner, an attractive Englishman, was not unsuited to the needs of Forbes-Robertson and his company, for his leading lady was his wife, the charming American actress, Miss Gertrude Elliott.

James was always most eager to succeed as a playwright, a desire that he poorly concealed under the pretense of wanting to have some decided financial benefit from his writing; the Forbes-Robertsons were impressed by the play's possibilities and shared the feeling of hero-worship that James, by his writing and his personal quality, inspired in so many people. The new arrangements for production, consequently, matured with promising rapidity. Inasmuch as Forbes-Robertson wanted a three-act play and, as the natural result of his years of acting experience, had various suggestions by which the story might become more fitted to the stage, James undertook to re-write to suit these new demands. Beginning toward the end of October, 1907, and working intermittently until the end of February, 1908,<sup>9</sup> the author put his story again into play form and made a number of minor changes in it. The gen-

eral purpose of these revisions was to make the play more comprehensible to the average playgoer and to heighten its dramatic values, particularly in the love story.

In the short story, Mrs. Gracedew, an American tourist, is busily occupied in "doing" the old churches and buildings about which she has read. On her way to Covering End, a historic country-house, she travels with a Miss Cora Prodmor, a very English girl of twenty-two. Upon the energetic American's arrival at this particular goal, she promptly is entranced by the house and her joy is augmented by her appreciation of Chivers, the butler, who seems to her to be the perfect type of devoted English servant. She soon learns that she has come at a most opportune moment: Mr. Prodmor, young Cora's father, holds mortgages on the house and intends to use financial pressure in order to force the heir into making a decision about his future. Captain Yule, whose family has owned Covering End through the years, must either lose his ancestral home or marry Cora; and, in order to be a fit son-in-law for the objectionable Mr. Prodmor, the Captain must renounce his markedly Liberal views for his family's usual Conservatism and then stand for the county in Parliament. Mrs. Gracedew does not hesitate to persuade her host that he should make these sacrifices in order to keep Covering End in the family and in its present character. Nevertheless, as soon as she realizes that Cora has no intention of furthering her father's plans and is, in fact, very much engaged to another young man, the American heroine, with typical courage and generosity,

<sup>9</sup> Leon Edel, *Henry James: Les Années dramatiques* (Paris: Jouve & Cie, 1931), pp. 192-94. James dictated the new play version of *Covering End* between October 23 and November 12; he was still altering it in February, 1908.

buys the house from Mr. Prodmore at a prodigious price—and thereby wins Captain Yule as a husband.

*The High Bid*, as James named the play, shows some slight constructional development, but the mutations made are shifts in emphasis rather than true alterations. The opening scene is modified so that from the very beginning Mrs. Gracedew dominates the action, and, consequently, interest in Chivers, the butler, is reduced. The climactic last scene, in which the realization of Captain Yule's and Mrs. Gracedew's mutual affection is both handicapped and furthered by the presence of a group of tourists intent upon seeing the house, has its mechanics transformed so that there will be less to distract the audience from the lovers; then, too, in the play version the latter are provided with clever curtain lines. More essential than these two somewhat technical improvements, the love story itself is built up and made more obvious: Captain Yule's eligibility as a charming bachelor is stressed by the coarse Mr. Prodmore; Mrs. Gracedew's lonely, if wealthy, widowhood is impressed upon the audience. Captain Yule and Mrs. Gracedew from their very first encounter in the play betray their strong attraction for each other, especially when they promptly plan another meeting to discuss their childhoods; and the whole last scene in which the heroine wins her English husband is somewhat strengthened. These steps in converting the story into a play evidently pleased Forbes-Robertson, but not all James's proposed modifications met with similar approval. The author tried lengthening a few of his scenes and did a bit more with Cora's love affair; this enlargement included writing in a part for the latter's fiancé, who in the new version was to appear briefly in the first act rather than

wait off stage in the summer-house for the reappearance of his betrothed. Interestingly enough, Forbes-Robertson, as the company studied and rehearsed the play, rejected almost all of these doubtful improvements and cut the play back to a version much nearer its short-story form.

The characterization in both story and drama also remains basically the same, but in *The High Bid* the two main protagonists are made more obvious exemplifications of their virtues and failings. The Captain Yule of the play is certainly a trifle more complex and romantic than his prototype in the tale: by the end of the drama he claims that he would not have been willing to save his estate by marrying the unloved Miss Prodmore; in this sudden growth of character he repudiates his own decision to which he had been so easily persuaded by the forceful Mrs. Gracedew. Just as the young man's stature is thus increased a bit, the heroine's personality is expanded. Much more given to slang than she was in the original story, she now scatters "ain'ts" and "awfuls," and is "killed" by Chivers' quaintness. On the other hand, her determination to improve herself, to become a person of culture and taste, is brought out, especially in one scene as she tells her English host about her home town, Missoura Top:

MRS. GRACEDEW: It's a growing place—forty thousand the last census. With nineteen schools. So you see we know things.

CAPTAIN YULE: Bless us—you've been to "nineteen"?

MRS. G.: Well, I guess I've been to Nine. And I teach in Six.

CAPTAIN Y.: And what do you teach?

MRS. G.: I teach Taste.

CAPTAIN Y.: As a "subject"?

MRS. G.: Yes, just Taste. (*Amused even a little at herself*): I'm "death" on Taste! But of course before I taught it I had to get it. So it was I got your Picture.

In this dialogue, Mrs. Gracedew is referring to a picture of Covering End, the estate, not of its owner, although the latter manages to misunderstand her. Incidentally, the whole scene, read today, approaches farce and might be considered to make the heroine somewhat ridiculous, but James—and Miss Elliott playing the part—held this bit of the play to be good evidence of Mrs. Gracedew's earnestness of purpose.

Verbal changes in the metamorphosis of the play from the story are far more interesting than these not too important variations in content. Here one can see James putting into practice his own dictum about the lucidity required by "the barbarous art of the actable drama."<sup>10</sup> As a rule the dialogue in the story was amply clear. He had to make comparatively few alterations in it, and most of those he did make are but obvious attempts to be more forceful. A "nobody" becomes a "vagrant nobody"; "indicate women" in Mr. Prodmores's speech give way to "loud—and possibly loose! women"; simple "mortgages" on the family home are now, alas, "rather heavy encumbrances." Occasionally James allowed himself the pleasure of a finer phrase, as when "bronze monument" is substituted for "statue." Captain Yule thinks of his ancestral estate as a cruel dragon, destroying many lives for its own existence, and this, he says in the story, "I taste in his very breath"; but in the play he is less literary and more conversational in his reaction: "I smell the damp of his very breath." More amusing is the change in Captain Yule's description of himself: if at first he was a "pure, passionate, pledged Radical," by 1908 he is a "rabid, roaring, raving, Radical."

<sup>10</sup> Henry James, letter to William Heinemann, November 30, 1894, in *A Most Unholy Trade, Being Letters on the Drama* ([Cambridge, Mass.]: Scarab Press, 1923), p. 14.

Once in a while there is little apparent reason for an alteration: "shockingly rude," for example, becomes "recklessly rude" and Mr. Prodmores urges his daughter not to behave like a "sick cow," while in the earlier version she was to avoid giving the effect of a "sick turkey," perhaps a more difficult command. More understandably, "feudal," in the butler's speech, becomes "'istoric," perhaps to allow Chivers to drop his *h* in the approved fashion for stage servants.

Such substitutions in the dialogue of one word or phrase for another seem relatively unimportant; undoubtedly the author devoted his main effort to making his ideas so explicit that the actors could fully understand the nuances of feeling required of them. Consequently, his directions to the players take on much of the nature of a translation of his usual style. In the story, Cora's emotions on being told of her father's plans for her marriage with Captain Yule are dealt with in a typically Jacobean sentence:

She could only oppose, now a stiff, thick transparency that yielded a view of the course in her own veins, after all, however, mingled with a feebler fluid, of the passionate blood of the Prodmores.

In the play, she is simply "grave with the dawn of a deeper resistance." Earlier in the story version of this same embarrassing scene between father and daughter, upon Mr. Prodmores's telling his daughter of the expected arrival of Captain Yule, "Cora's consciousness blinked." As a stage direction, this reaction of Cora's is "taking it rather blinkingly in." Further on in the story, Mr. Prodmores, telling Captain Yule that Cora awaits him in the morning-room, "glowed with consciousness"; this in the play becomes the plain statement that Prodmores was "taking all the responsibility" for his questionable taste in having Cora at Cover-

ing End while they discussed her marriage to its owner. After Captain Yule has apparently "burnt his ships" by accepting Mr. Prodmore's terms, his manner is "markedly, consciously caught" as he tells Mrs. Gracedew that he has followed her advice to keep Covering End in his family at any cost; this attitude of Yule's in the play becomes, more definitely, "rather hard and grim."

Such re-wordings seem to be only for the sake of clarity; sometimes James apparently allowed himself to shift his meaning: the fact that Miss Prodmore "failed to ignite" upon being given some new information is scarcely the same as having her "struck with this oddity." Even less is "the girl turned honestly flat" synonymous with the later "pretending, by a quick instinct, to more vagueness than she feels." And is Mrs. Gracedew's "droll, soft wail" of the story the same as her "charming wail" in *The High Bid*? Or is speaking "with propriety" exactly the same as being "a bit reproving"? When Mr. Prodmore, upon being told that his daughter has been seeing a forbidden suitor, rose "like outraged Neptune," was he merely "stupidified" as the stage direction indicates?

Lucidity on the dramatic level called for many of these little sacrifices of apt phrases and finely drawn ideas. Sometimes, on the contrary, James needed a good many more words to explain what the average reader of the story might have accepted without a second thought. Mrs. Gracedew, telling Mr. Prodmore that his plans have gone astray and about to bid for the house, "bravely laughed." Later, this did not satisfy the author, for he explains instead that the actress' manner should show the heroine "with her conscious habit of success, the sense of how it always floats, and will in a manner float her now, into port, over no mat-

ter what shallows, after no matter what bumps." Again, Mrs. Gracedew, while bidding for the house, admitted "with a world of wit" that everything about the place appealed to her. The stage direction is far more explicit, as she is to speak "with a conscious strained smile, but raising light and airy hands which just dispose, by a flourish, of any of the difficulties attending such a certainty." James, like many another author, did not wish to leave the interpretation of his phrases to any actor's or actress' instinct or imagination.

By March of 1908 these changes had been made to everyone's satisfaction; the story *Covering End* was transposed into the play *The High Bid*. James joined the Forbes-Robertsons and their company at Manchester, where they were currently appearing. There had been some preliminary London rehearsing, but here at Manchester the play was intensively prepared for presentation and here Forbes-Robertson did some fairly extensive cutting of the longer conversations; a good deal of casual dialogue, especially discussion of the charms of the English estate, was sacrificed in order that the main theme of the play and the love interest might be more discernible. Then around the twentieth of March, James, in high spirits, traveled with the company to Edinburgh. In a letter to Mrs. Wharton he writes happily of his "little play" as "pretty and pleasing and orthodox and mercenary and *safe* (*absit omen!*)—cravenly, ignobly canny: Also clearly to be very decently acted indeed." "Little" Gertrude Elliott, on whom he fully realized the success of the play depended, as she was to play Mrs. Gracedew, seemed to him to show "gallantry, capacity, and *vaiillance*" and her "intelligence and instinct" to be "capables de tout."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Lubbock, *op. cit.*, II, 98-99.

After all these propitious signs, on March 26 the play had its premier performance at Edinburgh. James was overjoyed at the favorable reception it received. Writing a week later to his nephew, Henry James, Jr., the proud author allowed himself to show the pleasure that the audience's enthusiastic reaction afforded him:

It had a *great* and charming success before a big house at Edinburgh—a real and unmistakable victory—but what was most brought home thereby is that it should have been discharged straight in the face of London. That will be its real and best function.<sup>12</sup>

The Edinburgh *Scotsman* agreed that *The High Bid* had had an "encouraging reception"; the dialogue was good and "if it does not scintillate, it is not devoid of either philosophy or humor to give it piquancy."<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, though the story was up to date, it lacked vitality and action. There was too much talk, too much sermonizing, especially in the second act. The critic also thought that Miss Elliott as Mrs. Gracedew had lost her naturalness by the end of the play. The other characterizations pleased him, except that of Captain Yule. The hero's personality seemed rather nebulous; Forbes-Robertson did not appear to his usual advantage. This last rather obvious comment, which simply meant that the part of Captain Yule did not allow Forbes-Robertson to demonstrate fully his remarkable acting ability, became a commonplace of most of the later reviews of the play.

James would have liked his play to reach London in May or June. The Forbes-Robertsons took it on tour to Glasgow, Newcastle, and Liverpool; they believed that they would appear in it in

London on October 6. But two factors intruded on this plan. More and more, their conviction grew that James's play was "caviare to the general." The *Glasgow Herald* picked up and emphasized the *Scotsman's* complaint that the play was all dialogue, often very clever, but nevertheless a "ceaseless torrent of talk." There might be plenty of little touches of wit, even of humor, but all the conversation did not reveal the characters; James's gentle satire had been achieved at the expense of his characters' dramatic life. Feeling that something had to be done for the play to be truly successful, Miss Elliott wrote to James, asking him to strengthen the plot. He replied, however, that he could not, for to do so would change the play. The second reason the Forbes-Robertsons hesitated about opening their London season with *The High Bid* was that they had found in Jerome K. Jerome's *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* a play which seemed more certain of success. James might quietly scorn Jerome's "platitudinous" and "insufferable" drama;<sup>14</sup> Max Beerbohm might publicly rant against Jerome as a "tenth-rate" writer and accuse Forbes-Robertson of "pusillanimity in prostituting his great gifts" by being willing to put on the allegory and to be seen in the titular role.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* was tremendously popular with audiences, and it offered, in contrast to *The High Bid*, an excellent part for Forbes-Robertson, one in which the quiet beauty and intense conviction of the actor's inter-

<sup>14</sup> Henry James, unpublished letters to Alice H. James, February 20, 1909, and to William James, Jr., February 28, 1909, in the Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>15</sup> Max Beerbohm, *The Saturday Review*, September 5, 1908; reprinted as "A Deplorable Affair," in *Around Theatres* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), II, 667.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>13</sup> Reprinted in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, April 16, 1908.

pretation of the leading role exercised an almost magic control over audiences. After two weeks' trial in the provinces, the Forbes-Robertsons opened their London season on September 1 with Jerome's play; on the fourteenth of that month James heard that any October performance of his play in London was out of the question.

But *The High Bid* was not destined to be completely unseen by London. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree urged the Forbes-Robertsons, still appearing in *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, to put on James's comedy with Tiercelin's one-act *The Soul's Fight* as one of the attractions in the Afternoon Theatre. The English capital at the time was enjoying a good many matinee performances of plays, many of them well known, but some of them new; all were of decided interest to connoisseurs of the drama, even though the expense of a regular presentation might not be warranted by the probable popular response. For instance, the subscription series in which Tree wanted James's play to be included had among its other attractions William Archer's translation of Hauptmann's poetic drama *Hannele*, Schnitzler's *Light o' Love* (*Lieb-elei*), Obermer's *The House of Bondage*, Shaw's *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet* and his *The Admirable Bashville*, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, and the Henley-Stevenson collaboration, *Admiral Guinea*. The Forbes-Robertsons, fond as they were of James and his play, decided to put on a combined James-Tiercelin program. Accordingly, on February 18, 1909, *The High Bid* opened at His Majesty's Theatre for a brief run of five matinee performances. It is to be noted that not only was the play one of a series of distinguished plays being put on for selected afternoon audiences, but that the London theater at the time could offer

some good dramatic fare. During the week James's comedy was to be seen on the London boards, other attractions currently appearing included revivals of Henry Arthur Jones's *The Dancing Girl* and of Goldsmith's *She Stoops To Conquer*; two plays by Anthony Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda* (also a revival) and *The Adventure of Lady Ursula*; Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows*, starring Gerald du Maurier; Bernstein's *Samson*; and Mrs. Patrick Campbell in *Olive Latimer's Husband*. For musical entertainment, there was Lehar's *The Merry Widow* at Daly's, not to mention a Gilbert and Sullivan company in repertoire at the Savoy.

Competition may have run high, but criticism of *The High Bid* was not unfavorable. Max Beerbohm, in the *Saturday Review*,<sup>16</sup> took the attitude of an open and confirmed James enthusiast. Most of his essay is devoted to general praise of James's sensitivity and skill as a writer; only toward the end of the article does he get to the play itself and to the point that the latter is to be valued even if it gives but a small part of the author's "unalienable magic." Other reviewers were less outspoken in their admiration of James's work as a whole, but none of them succeeded in forgetting that they were commenting on a writer famous for his subtlety of thought and expression and not on a more conventional dramatist. A. B. Walkley, the London *Times*'<sup>17</sup> critic, mentioned that he had had a lovely time at the performance, even if James was "no hand at a plot." Walkley, indeed, was so favorable in the tenor of his remarks that Beerbohm publicly complimented him for his perspicacity. E. A. Baughan, writing for the London *Daily*

<sup>16</sup> February 27, 1909; reprinted in *Around Theatres*, II, 698-703.

<sup>17</sup> February 19, 1909.

*News*,<sup>18</sup> found "much of distinction, cleverness, subtlety" in what he felt remained "a mild and amiable satire and never once becomes a play." Other critics noted that the play had been warmly applauded, praised its "charming" dialogue, and noted dutifully the lack of real plot. Everyone was enthusiastic about Miss Elliott's artistic triumph in her portrayal of Mrs. Gracedew. Indeed, the *Daily Chronicle*, with unconscious humor that must have amused James, went so far in its compliment to the actress as to declare:

Miss Gertrude Elliott would have made one say that she was too gentle and too charming for a young American, if it were not a fact that she actually is one.<sup>19</sup>

The characterizations of Mr. Prodmore as the typical rich parvenu, played by Edward Sass, and of Chivers as the faithful servant, played by Ian Robertson,

were duly praised by most of the critics. The most that they found to say about Forbes-Robertson as Captain Yule was to dwell upon his general grace and elocution.

This reception of his comedy pleased James, especially as Forbes-Robertson told him his play had had the best audiences of any of the set of plays presented in this afternoon series. But great as was his desire for recognition of his dramatic genius, James was quick and reasonable<sup>20</sup> in his acceptance of the fact that the Forbes-Robertsons could not afford to sacrifice the certain profits of a long run in *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* to put on his play, admittedly of less popular appeal, however much limited matinee audiences might delight in it. He could only hope that someday *The High Bid* would be revived and, at last, appreciated.

<sup>20</sup> Henry James, unpublished letters to Alice H. James, February 20, 1909, and to William James, Jr., February 28, 1909, in the Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>18</sup> February 19, 1909.

<sup>19</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, February 19, 1909.

#### COURSE IN CHAUCER

RICHARD C. PETTIGREW<sup>1</sup>

He faced them with his usual trepidation,  
Addressing thirty different worlds at once  
And asking them to share with him a world  
Not his but Chaucer's. Could that gay old dog  
Sell them his England where, then, "shoures" were "sote,"  
And monks had "many a deyntee hors in stable"?  
The best that he, their un-Chaucerian teacher,  
Could hope was that old Geoffrey would succeed  
In stealing the show, in making them unaware  
Of thirty worlds and one that faced the thirty.  
Smiling with fat-monk joviality,  
He suddenly blushed and let the fat smile fade.  
"Students," he said, flattening palms on his desk,  
"The first thing you must get straight on is this:  
Chaucer is hard at start simply because  
He was so much like us and used street words  
Instead of book ones. Street words run street risks,  
Get maimed, get killed—at best get mummified  
In Robinson's one-volume Chaucer." Here  
A hand went up. And "pilgrims were they alle."

<sup>1</sup> Arkadelphia, Ark.

## *Pamela's Stepdaughters*

### *The Heroines of Smollett and Fielding*

EDWARD C. MACK<sup>1</sup>

THE conventional beliefs of an age are usually most transparently revealed by its lesser figures. In discussing the ideal of the heroine in eighteenth-century literature, the authors of *Pamela's Daughters*<sup>2</sup> have therefore quite properly—after paying due respect to Richardson, the virtual creator of the ideal—gone to the minor novelists for descriptions of womanly perfection as the age envisioned it. Unfortunately, however, this procedure has involved a neglect of what is, from a literary point of view, the most interesting part of the story of the eighteenth-century heroine: the treatment accorded her by the greater novelists. It is, after all, the great writers who matter; the standards of an age have—for literature—importance primarily for their impact on these writers. And such impact is illuminatingly illustrated by the reactions of Smollett and Fielding to the eighteenth-century ideals of womanhood and of love.

A creation of the upper middle classes whose women were more an ornament than a useful part of the economic system, the eighteenth-century ideal of woman combined the moral attributes of a Puritan inheritance with qualities lifted from a chivalric past. Like so many

eighteenth-century ideals, it was a compromise: emphasizing virtue, it was neither ascetic nor frankly utilitarian; stressing sensibility, it eschewed romantic passion no less than frank sensuality. An attempt to temporize between a monkish austerity, a romantic expansiveness, and the robust common sense of the eighteenth century, it seems a pale and lackluster ghost of an ideal. That it should have satisfied so many generations of English writers is not the least of literary mysteries.

To say that the eighteenth-century heroine was, above all, to be virtuous is both the most important and the least meaningful thing one can say of her. The ideal pervades everything and implies in a general way those moral attributes, usually of a restrictive kind, such as dutifulness, obedience, and purity, which contrast with pity, generosity, and other expansive qualities. But eighteenth-century writers were tantalizingly vague on the subject and could in one breath refer to virtue *and* kindness and in another imply that kindness was part of virtue. Moreover, they never seemed able to decide whether virtue was an innate sense of right and wrong (her virtue protected her honor) or the sort of conduct that resulted from this or some other cause. Finally, they usually avoided both issues by letting virtue, for practical purposes, mean merely sexual virtue, and this in turn meant chastity, the physical condition that virtue was supposed to protect.

<sup>1</sup> Assistant professor of English, College of the City of New York. Author of *Public Schools and British Opinion, 1780-1860* (London, 1938) and *Public Schools and British Opinion, 1860-1939* (New York, 1941).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Palfrey Utter and Gwendolyn Bridges Needham, *Pamela's Daughters* (New York, 1936).

Certainly sexual virtue, in whichever way it was thought of, was the *sine qua non* of the eighteenth-century heroine, whose relationship to suitor or husband overshadowed everything else in life. Unless she was chaste, she was not virtuous, no matter how noble, obedient, or dutiful she might be. On the other hand, since the hearth, not a monastery, was the ideal goal, she was not supposed to remain a virgin: a wife was virtuous and chaste who remained faithful to her husband.

Sensibility, though not always too carefully distinguished from virtue, was actually the other side of the medal. The eighteenth-century heroine was the prophet of the new sentimentalism, of the sentiments of love and pity and benevolence. Most of the other traits of her personality, as well as her appearance, were in consonance with this dominant attribute. With her gentility of manner, her girlish symmetrical beauty, her delicate air, her modesty and submissiveness, her fainting fits, her frequent tears, her prudery of words and act, her studied innocence of even her own natural functions, and her ignorance of politics or history or science or philosophy or anything except a few "accomplishments," such as speaking French and playing on the harpsichord, she was the very essence of softness and passivity and gentility. The love that this paragon of virtue and gentleness felt for the man of her choice was to be without passion or ecstasy, a compound of esteem, gratitude, and affection; in return she was to be loved by a good and pure man in the sentimental manner to which she was entitled. When married, the happy couple were to spend their lives in pastoral domestic bliss surrounded by the cultivated simplicity so dear to eighteenth-century hearts.

Though this conception of woman and love and marriage was ideal, it was neither so remote from actuality nor so visionary as one might suppose. If few perfect women or marriages existed, many eighteenth-century girls must have been very much like the model heroine, and the ideal marriage was possible if not likely. More important, the century, in its down-to-earth way, embodied various concessions to actuality in its ideal. In real life sexual desire plays a role denied it by ideal love; but all eighteenth-century writers saw to it that the heroine was attractive enough to arouse desire and permitted the male (though never the female, who was not even supposed to know about sex) to feel a modicum of such desire. In real life the kind of marriage contemplated demanded money and position, and these were always implied though they were not supposed to be emphasized. In real life, finally, the upper-middle-class girl of small means had no other choice, if she were not to starve, but to marry, and it was thus her business to protect her virginity from ravishers and to cash it in for the best possible match. The romancers concealed this state of affairs as best they could. But they always armed their heroine with what they called vaguely "common sense," "prudence," and "discretion"—though never knowledge, independence, resourcefulness—to help her protect her virtue and find the proper match. And in a key instance—Richardson's *Pamela*—it was made a little too clear that a virtuous heroine not only would marry a man who had tried to seduce her but would applaud herself and be applauded by the world for having captured wealth and position by using her virtue as a trump card.

The real criticism of the eighteenth-century ideal is, indeed, not that it was

too visionary but rather that it was too mundane, too uninteresting. The average girl may not have knowledge or resourcefulness; the average love affair may not have ecstasy, passion, mystery, or spirituality; but to create an ideal dream of woman and love without any of these things is to reveal a poverty of the imagination that even Richardson's magnificent utilization of his material cannot altogether hide.

It was, interestingly enough, Smollett who came the closer to reproducing *in toto* the model heroine. From Narcissa of *Roderick Random* to Lydia of *Humphry Clinker*, his leading ladies differ from the norm as little as they do from one another. Endowed above all with virtue and discretion, they dedicated themselves wholeheartedly and exclusively to preserving their chastity against the advances not only of Smollett's villains but of his heroes, who were little less predatory than his villains. Even more, they seemed, with their respect for the "punctilios" of their sex, concerned with decorum or the appearance of virtue. Nevertheless, despite a forbidding exterior, even Emilia has not the "savageness of delicacy" to refuse Peregrine's hand when, having failed to make her his mistress, he finally offers marriage. "Common sense" never finds "chastened rapture" or "virtuous fondness" incompatible with "dignity" and "unaffected modesty." In appearance they are all perfect models of delicacy, elegance, and classic symmetry and possess a "soft and feminine grace which attracts the sympathy and engages the protection of every humane beholder." This "soft and feminine grace" is a guaranty of the "refined feelings" of these "hermits in humility."

If Smollett's heroine had any other attributes, they are kept darkly in the

background. Her "rational understanding," which is constantly emphasized, produced, under the stimulus of a "genteel" education, an ability to "write and spell, and speak French, and play on the harpsichord," dance "finely," and evoke a "strain of vocal music, more plaintive than the widowed turtles' moan, more sweet and ravishing than Philomel's love-warbled song." If she used her mind for any other purpose, we never learn of it; and of spirit or originality or any other positive quality she was utterly destitute.

On the subject of marriage itself Smollett made the usual eighteenth-century compromise. According to Matthew Bramble, "in the choice of a husband, a young woman ought not to sacrifice the feelings of her heart for any consideration upon earth." But neither in his theory nor in his practice did Smollett ever give the impression that love was really enough. His heroines are all well-born, daughters of country gentlemen or merchants, who, because, as a class, they united virtue with wealth and breeding, Smollett preferred to the nobility. They deserved husbands who could place them "in that distinguished sphere" to which they were "entitled by . . . birth and qualifications." And they always found such husbands. Even Lydia, who seemed in danger of marrying a "wretched stroller," ended up, much to everyone's relief, in the arms of a "gentleman her equal in rank and superior in fortune." The matter of fortune was equally important. Emilia may say she will marry Perry though he have not a penny; but we do not believe her. In truth Smollett's ideal of married life, combining as it does the characteristic eighteenth-century requisites of pastoral bliss with solid comfort, requires money. Without a reasonable sum in the bank, one can hardly

spend the nights "walking by the sedgy bank of some transparent stream . . . pruning the luxuriant vine" or "sitting in social converse . . . in a shady grove of . . . [one's] own planting."

One does not have to be very familiar with Smollett to recognize that his treatment of his heroines contrasts strikingly with the rest of his work and fails to square with what we know of his temperament and beliefs. It is true that beneath his rather bearish exterior Smollett concealed a deep tenderness, that he was essentially a moralist, and that the rather mundane eighteenth-century ideal would have had greater appeal for him than a more romantic conception. But, as Smollett saw the world, there was little room in it for the ideal at all and less chance for its success. No amount even of discretion and prudence would save the good man in a universe shaped to a pattern of evil, a universe in which kindness and softness rarely existed, and in which, when they did, they were—despite Smollett's verbal insistence that virtue triumphs—inevitably crushed. Smollett's reaction to this state of affairs was to create heroes who could, by being neither discreet nor overly moral, outbrave a wicked world. And to these hardboiled, courageous, faithless, revengeful—and successful—heroes Smollett extended an admiration the meaning of which is hardly obscured by his insistence that Roderick and Peregrine were good at heart. Such a man might admire virtue and tenderness of a sort, but hardly the sort exhibited by his overly discreet, colorlessly pure, and tearful heroines. It is hard to believe that Matthew Bramble was not expressing Smollett's real opinion when he called Lydia a "good-natured simpleton, as soft as butter, and as easily melted." Nor can one imagine Smollett's robust

and restless soul content in the pastoral Eden of his imagining.

To the artist no less than to the man the creation of Narcissas and Emilias was, one suspects, an uncongenial task. Whatever he may have believed about the world, Smollett's genius attracted him toward picturing its folly and evil in humorous or bitterly satirical strokes, not toward poetizing the ideal. Farcical travesty, slashing caricature, pictures of romantic horror, or occasionally half-humorous, half-tender portraits of oddities like Captain Bowling—these were his forte. And there is no suggestion outside his heroines that he was ever drawn to picture the ideal. Indeed, in theory he strongly disapproved, disliking readers and critics who, "in the chastity and excellency" of their conception, desire only "taste," "agreeable characters," "decorum," and high life, "that goal of perfection . . . where decency, divested of all substance, hovers about like a fantastic shadow."

One is thus drawn to the conclusion that, in creating his heroines, Smollett was probably satisfying public taste, not his own. And his treatment of the subject lends weight to this supposition. Exact reproduction is likely to occur when one is so completely out of sympathy with an ideal as to prevent reconciliation between the personal and the conventional. Smollett not only made reproductions but made them so badly that no one could possibly mistake them for the original. His heroines are mere stereotypes. They never learn or develop and seldom even act; indeed, in the absurd melodramatic plots in which they appear they can do little but wait for the inevitable *deus ex machina* to extricate them from their difficulties and bring about the happy ending, which was so out of keeping with Smollett's view of

life. In Smollett the Richardsonian ideal has been drained of all content and meaning.

Yet this is not the final word on Smollett's heroines. No one with as powerful a personality as Smollett's could simply have copied the conventions even in matters about which he seems relatively indifferent. To some extent he consciously modified the ideal, particularly in the creation of Emilia. Utter and Needham go, I believe, much too far in stating that Smollett was an antisentimentalist as proved by his treatment of Emilia, for in most respects she follows the conventional pattern. But it is true that she is not free from laughable faults and possesses a coquetry, a gaiety, and an aggressive spirit foreign to most heroines. She weeps only under great provocation, and, when Peregrine attacks her honor, she neither faints nor appeals to Heaven but extricates herself by her own activity. Lydia shows enough spirit to box the ear of a lad who thrust his hand into her bosom.

Much more interesting, however, is what appears to be Smollett's unconscious perverting of the ideal. Though ostensibly defending the conventional concept, Smollett actually succeeds in betraying it. Where he leaves the reader with any concrete impression at all, it is that his heroine, far from being an ideal companion for heart or head, is merely an attractive sex object, whose attractiveness is sometimes enhanced by the possession of earthly goods. Committed, as were his contemporaries, to an ideal whose essence was a delicate compromise between sentiment and earthly needs, he managed to give reality only to the latter. Smollett may talk much of Emilia's virtue and benevolence, but what the reader remembers is how "her bosom heaved with such bewitching

undulation, that the cambric could not conceal or contain the snowy hemispheres that rose like a vision of paradise"—a description which goes far toward justifying Scott's remark that Smollett's women are "drawn as the objects rather of appetite than affection."

Usually Smollett refrains from admitting that his heroines ever know desire, though he allows Emilia "transports" mixed with "diffidence and apprehension" on her wedding night and implies that Aurelia, no less than Launcelot, attains "the consummation of all earthy felicity" on hers. But his heroes give up all pretense of concealing their true interest in marriage as the happy event approaches. For example, Peregrine, his passions "whetted with all the incitements which could stimulate the human heart," came into the bridal chamber "like a lion rushing on his prey."

Such lines lead one to suspect that Smollett must have been conscious of perverting the sentimental ideal and might even have been making sport of it. But, though neither of these interesting possibilities can be entirely ruled out, they do not seem likely interpretations. Nothing we know about Smollett suggests that he was capable of such subtle travesty; on the other hand, it is hard to believe that, had he been aware of the disparity between intention and effect, he would have allowed it to stand. Much more probably Smollett paid the penalty for mere lip service to an ideal by unconsciously making a mockery of it. In spite of himself, he expressed the actuality of an age that talked much of sentiment and virtue but gave the rewards of marriage—so desperately desired—either to women with estates or to those with faces and bodies that would make a man forget a meager dowry.

To the casual observer Fielding would appear to be as little equipped as was Smollett to appreciate or effectively reproduce the eighteenth-century conception of a heroine. In temperament, outlook, and artistry he seems the complete opposite of Richardson and has himself pointed the contrast by the delight he evidently took in deriding Richardson's ideal.

Yet actually there is a good deal less of a contrast than one might at first suppose. Above all, the difference between sentimentalist and rationalist, which certainly looms largest, turns out to be less a matter of belief than one of emphasis and tone. An extrovert and man of the world, Fielding is both franker and more matter of fact in his approach than Richardson. Thus he can say coolly of Amelia, "a good heart will at all times betray the best head in the world," and can call love a "rational passion" which "can never be violent but when reciprocal," which seems hardly to do justice to what the sentimentalist intended. But the enormous differences of tone between their books should not blind us to the underlying similarity of Fielding's and Richardson's views. Though a rationalist, Fielding no less than Richardson saw moral virtue and benevolence as the prime values and assumed that these were essentially innate qualities, beyond the power of reason or education to do more than support. The whole of *Tom Jones* is in effect a lesson on the superiority of a good heart, for the possession of which Tom is forgiven many faults, to prudence and calculation, which, when not based on right feeling, can produce that most loathsome of creatures, Master Blifil. However coolly Fielding may express himself, sentimental love, not money or desire (which Fielding referred to as similar to the passion "a lusty divine is apt to conceive for the well drest

sirloin"), should be the basis of marriage. If to feel "esteem, gratitude, and pity . . . indeed, all which the nicest delicacy can allow" does not seem to us, as it does to Sophia, like loving Tom "to distraction," it is nevertheless an exact description of ideal love in the eighteenth century. Fielding made a point of excluding from Elysium a wise man who was too prudent to marry the woman he loved.

As to virtue, Fielding is equally clear. Less expectant of chastity among men and therefore more charitable to lapses than Richardson, he can forgive Tom Jones where Richardson would not. But there is no suggestion that Fielding approves of Tom's actions—for which indeed he is punished—or that Tom is as good a man as the quixotic Adams, whom Fielding loves for his very absurdity. And about female virtue Fielding is as strict in fact as Richardson, though he does not as a rule feel it necessary (note, however, Allworthy's strong words to Jones on the subject) to moralize about those who yield to temptation. If he sneers, it is never at real virtue but at the pretense of virtue—at those who emphasize the external signs of virtue, decorum and fine sentiment, just because they lack the real thing. This, indeed, is his case against Pamela, whom, far from disliking for being too virtuous, he satirizes for not being really virtuous at all—for hiding a callous and snobbish scheme to trade her chastity for a matrimonial tie behind a façade of prudery and sentiment. Richardson took care not to make the same mistake in *Clarissa*, a novel of which Fielding highly approved.

If the contrast between sentimentalist and rationalist is, nevertheless, a very real one, that between idealist and realist has been exaggerated. Richardson was quite obviously, in his own way, a realist, and Fielding has many claims to be considered an idealist. As an artist Field-

ing could, though it was not his usual practice, create, in Blifil, complete villainy; and in at least two examples besides his heroines—Allworthy and Dr. Harrison—he produced entire goodness. Indeed, though Fielding thought extreme virtue even less believable in fiction than extreme villainy, he did not, like Smollett, feel instinctively that it could not exist. Nor did he have a view of the world that made the triumph of the ideal impossible. In Fielding's sanguine but philosophically consistent picture of reality, only indiscretion prevented the virtuous and kindhearted from attaining worldly happiness, though when he wrote *Amelia* he was not quite so sure of this as when he wrote *Tom Jones*. Finally, though characteristically the ironic spectator, Fielding was often in deadly earnest, as nearly the whole of *Amelia* indicates; nor was he incapable, when the occasion demanded, of displaying considerable warmth of affection. When one considers, therefore, that the eighteenth-century heroine embodied values in which he firmly believed, it is not so surprising as it might at first appear that Fielding was able, far more effectively than Smollett, to come to terms in his art with the feminine ideal cherished by his contemporaries.

Basically, Fielding's heroines follow the conventional pattern. Even Fanny Andrews, though meant as a contrast to the snobbish Pamela, bears resemblance to the Pamela of Richardson's novels. And the lovely Sophia no less than the colorless Mrs. Heartfree of *Jonathan Wild* and the matronly Amelia are, despite Fielding's insistence that his wife was the source for his two greatest portraits, in essential respects models of the eighteenth-century heroine. All are innocent, feminine, and kindhearted; all are chaste, modest, decorous, and dutiful: even Sophia does not marry until she

gets her father's consent. All have the classically symmetrical and delicate beauty that was the fashion, though Fielding forgot to remedy a broken nose that Amelia had once suffered. All are well bred and naturally genteel and have the conventional accomplishments, but are not so clever as to call attention to themselves. A conservative on this score, Fielding was pleased because Sophia had "no pretence to wit, much less to that kind of wisdom which is the result only of great learning and experience, the affectation of which, in a young woman, is as absurd as any of the affectations of an ape." All love deeply, but without consciousness of sex, and with a due regard for money and position; and are loved with respect and veneration, mixed with just the minimum of desire. Their married lives are pictures of simple domestic bliss, though Amelia does not achieve her "perfect happiness over a homely meal," that "calm serene happiness which is seated in content," until long after a marriage whose stormy course it is the purpose of *Amelia* to trace.

Unlike Smollett, however, Fielding made no mere carbon copy of his model. Just because he was spiritually at home in the creation of his heroines, he could, paradoxically, re-create the ideal in terms of his own personality and outlook. This meant, most obviously, that he could, without ever perverting the ideal as did Smollett, make far greater changes in detail than the latter ever attempted. Fanny, Sophia, Mrs. Heartfree, and Amelia are relations, but not close blood relations, of Pamela and Clarissa. And they differ considerably from one another, since they represent three stages of Fielding's art. Fanny, the roughest sketch of a heroine, is nearest to Smollett's conception, a sweet and youthful and passive object of sentiment and desire. Sophia is the boldest and

most active, a sentimental and moral heroine who nevertheless is gay, sensible, courageous, and not incapable of making her own decisions when circumstances demand. The best reflection of Fielding's sanguine, extroverted temperament, she blazes the trail that leads straight to Jane Austen's Elizabeth; indeed, though to me she still seems in essential respects the eighteenth-century heroine, it is hard to quarrel with those who say that in this one instance Fielding actually broke the conventional mold. Mrs. Heartfree, who is used merely as a foil for Wild's "greatness," is but a symbol of tender domesticity, a type developed more fully in *Amelia*. The latter, despite Richardson's aspersions, is closest to his *Clarissa*, loyal and courageous, but overly serious and tenderhearted and passive and prudish. A creation of the years when Fielding's health and spirits were declining, she reveals most clearly the influence of the age on Fielding.

Fielding's absorption of the ideal is further demonstrated by his tact in handling it. Those qualities of his heroines—particularly their beauty and sensibility—which he did not wish to emphasize or felt himself unable to do justice to he treats lightly and humorously or else with calm restraint. Love scenes, melodrama, and episodes full of high emotional tension in general he eschews, laughs at, or underplays. In *Tom Jones* and particularly in *Joseph Andrews* the humor predominates; in *Amelia*—and in a few places in *Tom Jones*—where the tragic seriousness of the situation forbids humor, Fielding's infallible taste and cool tact are most in evidence. The effect in either case is to take the high emotional edge off Fielding's books, to give a less romantic, often more mundane, quality to his version of the eighteenth-century heroine and her doings than one finds in Richardson.

Drawn to his particular specifications, the eighteenth-century heroine becomes, in Fielding's hands, a reality. *Amelia*, certainly *Sophia*, and, even within limits, *Fanny*, are, not mere abstractions but charming women, made warm and living through Fielding's power as a dramatist. And *Fanny* and *Sophia* at least—Fielding had grown too grave by the time he wrote *Amelia* to give his last heroine many of the marks of common humanity—have the minor physical and moral blemishes of ordinary mortals and suffer the ridiculous mishaps to which "heroines" were conventionally supposed to be immune. That *Sophia* almost stayed home instead of following *Tom*, so that she might be considered a martyr to duty, is a particularly modern touch.

The moral to be drawn from all this appears clear enough. Equally committed to reproducing the eighteenth-century heroine, Fielding and Smollett offer a seemingly perfect object-lesson in the fruitful and sterile methods of coming to terms with popular taste. The one absorbed and therefore brought the convention to life; the other, unable to do this, gives us but a pasteboard caricature of an ideal.

But this is not quite the whole story. A second glance will, I think, convince most readers that Fielding's heroines are not, despite all that can be said for them, his most successful creations. Never mere dull copies of an ideal, they are not completely memorable figures either. If one must except from this judgment the heroine of *Tom Jones*, it is nevertheless true that *Clarissa Harlowe* is a greater portrait than *Sophia Western*, a fact which anyone who has the patience to read through Richardson's book can easily verify.

In a sense, of course, this but confirms

the lesson. For if Fielding partially fails, it is because he did not completely absorb the convention. As the most casual observation will show, Fielding was less at home in the world of the ideal than among the curious patchwork figures of common humanity, whom he portrayed with such incredible accuracy, gusto, and kindly tolerance. A robust extrovert, he never understood the female heart in the intimate way that Richardson did; nor did he have the latter's poetic power. The serious and emotional parts of his work are the least effective, with the result that *Amelia* is, as a whole, a tedious book.

Yet a host of other considerations at least suggest themselves when we let our thoughts run over the English novels of the century following the death of Fielding and reflect that even the great, like Scott and Dickens, were as haunted by the Richardsonian heroine as was Field-

ing and yet were all equally incapable of bringing her to life. Is perfection virtually impossible to make convincing? Or is a convention an almost fatal hindrance to a modern writer? Or is it merely that the eighteenth-century feminine ideal is too vapid for successful re-creation except by a man with Richardson's peculiar combination of traits? Whatever be the answer, there is little doubt that the modern reader turns with relief from *Amelia* to Elizabeth Bennet and relishes *Sterne* in no small part just because, only a few years after Fielding's death, he threw overboard the whole convention of a "feminine lead." And if Charlotte Brontë seems a great novelist to us, it is largely because she brought to incandescent life a heroine who was most decidedly not sister to Pamela or to any other previous heroine of fiction, who was not, in the older conventional sense, a heroine at all.

## *English for These Times: Some Issues and Implications<sup>1</sup>*

HELENE W. HARTLEY<sup>2</sup>

THE theme that has been chosen as the center for our thought during these coming sessions of the Council, simply phrased, innocuously general though it seems, plunges us by its implications into profound educational issues and is fraught with semantic difficulties that might easily trap the unwary. But the theme was not lightly chosen. It was thoughtfully selected to guide our deliberations in directions it seemed profitable

for us at this time to take. For this reason, I want to devote the few minutes that are mine at this opening session not to present my own beliefs or hopes or experience with respect to teaching "English for These Times" but rather to try to point out some of the implications of the theme and perhaps to speak a word of warning against certain misconceptions that the phrase itself might easily engender.

If we could have a clear statement of the points of view concerning the teaching of English that are represented in this audience tonight, and that find expression in the way we carry on our work

<sup>1</sup> President's Address to the National Council of Teachers of English at the opening of its Thirty-sixth Annual Meeting, November 28, 1946, in Atlantic City.

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as teachers at whatever level of instruction, we should doubtless find that we are grouped at several different points along a continuum (to use the language of the statistician), with substantial numbers piling up at either end. Because these differences have some bearing on our theme, it may be profitable to glance briefly at a few of the points around which the largest groups would be found to cluster.

If we start at one of the extremes of the continuum, we shall find a grouping around a point of great vitality and wide appeal. Keenly aware of the painstaking scholarship and of the high creative effort that over the centuries has accumulated the body of subject matter we call "English," a group of our ablest teachers conceive their role to be to transmit this product of human endeavor, this hard-won store of learning and of art, this rich portion of man's heritage of culture, to the oncoming generations, and to imbue them with some perception of its worth.

During the first year of our participation in the recent war, I visited a boys' school. There I saw a gifted teacher urging a senior class through the reading of a long list of the world's great books. His passionate intensity had somehow permeated the class. This was evident when one lad laid *The Divine Comedy* on the desk of the teacher. In a strained and anxious tone he said, "But I cannot understand it, Sir. I've tried three times."

"Try again," was the answer. "And try again! See, I'll help you. Read as far as this, and after that you'll never let it go."

Later the teacher said to me. "They'll be off to war soon, you know. Many won't come back again. Death is their lot. But we must not let them die disinherited!" The times had affected this man's work, it is true, but only in the sense of urgency with which he sought to

fulfil his role, to see that these, the young, received at least some of their heritage while yet there was time. To such as he, even to scores less dedicated to the concept of that heritage, the phrase "English for These Times" rings with a slightly superficial undertone; it savors of opportunism, of concern with the transient moment, of pursuit of the fugitive, darting need across the surface of living.

But let us move along the continuum, at least one step away. No less aware of English as a great storehouse of accumulated wealth, here is a group who interpret their teaching task as that of giving access to the precious store. Not to transmit it, rather to give the power to win possession of it—this is their goal. But the power to speak, to write, to read—these are not acquired in a vacuum, nor by abstraction or generalization alone. "The times" give a vital context of meaning through which these powers can be developed. Thus "English *through* these times" has become a prevalent form of instruction in classrooms throughout the land. It is important to see that, sound though this position doubtless is, it misses the import of our theme and evades the issues that it raises.

At one more point a grouping would appear, before we reach the other extreme of the continuum. Here the emphasis is reversed. To minister to human needs, this is the purpose of all education; as teachers of English we must ask what those basically unchanging human needs are that we through this subject may somehow serve. The need for relaxation and enjoyment; the eternal search for meaning and for truth; the thirst for beauty; the desire to realize one's self as like and yet unlike one's kind; the strange insistent urge to express and to create—to this group these are needs transcending any time or place.

Turn now to the other extreme from that at which we started. Here are those—layman and teacher alike—who, aware of the catastrophic changes brought about by modern civilization, the impact of a technological age upon our way of life, our leisure, work, homes, personal relations, sense of values, and our very chances of survival—turn to education as a last desperate hope of achieving an organized human existence. These call upon teachers of English no less than upon other educators to make “these times” the center upon which all their efforts are bent, lest if we fail to solve the problems of “these times” through such a means, all else for which we have labored be in vain.

Indeed, so insistent has this demand become that any part of the curriculum of school or college that cannot clearly show its contribution to some immediate phase of current living tends to be pushed from the center into the fringe of academic attention, to become elective in status, permissive for the few who may find time for it outside the real and imperative business of an education. That English has become suspect under this pressure and is already in many a school and college being precipitately moved toward the fringe, I do not need in this audience to state.

Recognizing as we must the imperative nature of this emphasis, does it not behoove us first to evaluate the demand itself, with all the wisdom and perspective and objectivity we can bring to bear upon it—neither swept by fears or pressures into untenable positions nor prevented by devotion to other values from perceiving the truth as it may appear? Must we not further make honest effort to weigh this concept of our role and our responsibility in relation to other values? Do we not also need to study the nature of language and literature anew in the

light of this demand, attempting to discover what within the scope of this subject as a medium of education we might contribute to education for these times—what uniquely, in a sense not possible perhaps through any other medium, and what in common cause with others?

Such is the purpose underlying our convention theme. The phrase was not stated as a slogan or a battle cry; it implies no rejection of other values; it stands as a sincere inquiry—“English for These Times?” In planning the program, we have brought together the best thought available, representing not one point of view with respect to the theme but diversity of reasoning; we have assembled for our study the actual experience of teachers in classrooms throughout the land at every academic level as they have attempted to respond to “the times.” It is hoped that we shall be able to weigh their undertakings, to deliberate, and to see whether within the span of two days’ effort we may emerge with some clearer understanding of the true scope of education and of English as a means of education for these times.

But there are barriers in the way of our clear seeing. To consider them at the beginning of our deliberations may go far toward their removal.

The first is a serious semantic danger. It lies in the tendency to *speak* and thus, inadvertently, to *think* of “the times” as having an entity in itself, a kind of superstructure of conditions and events set about us by some combination of fortuitous circumstance, a way of life with which somehow we must learn to make our peace. It does not matter whether we feel the “times are out of joint; alas that I was born to set them right” or whether, peacefully with Robert Frost’s “Clock in the Village Tower,” we proclaim that “the time is neither wrong nor right”; in either case we are in dan-

ger of serious error if we fail constantly to realize that "the times" are merely what men do, what men create, what men precipitate, what men control.

Let me restate this as it is said by a chemist in a book just off the press:

The capacity of science to devise new methods of warfare seems unbounded. We still retain goose pimples from the threat of a super-destructive atomic war, when the threat of a more dreadful biological warfare is held before us. . . . [But] We are not threatened by some outside forces which are about to destroy us. If we are destroyed, the destruction will come from within. Atomic disintegration becomes dangerous only when it is under *our* control.<sup>3</sup>

It is by escaping the semantic fallacy of the times as an entity that the validity of the demand upon educators appears. If the times are but our ways of ordering our lives, of directing our activities, of controlling our powers, then with some justification may men turn to those who help to educate the race and say, "This is your supremely important task. Educate us and our young to create times in which human beings can live and find satisfaction and know security. This is your role."

But even as we admit the validity of the charge upon education in the light of such a true meaning of "the times," we are given pause. To meet this challenge, *we do not know enough*. Herein lies our limitation—not in potentialities or in our will but in what we know. To fail to recognize the limits of our knowledge may lead us to dissipate our energies in futile or misguided effort. We may even, at times, intensify the very problems that we seek to solve. Lest you think this an unduly skeptical statement of our plight, let me quote from one of our particularly careful and scientifically exact social psychologists. In answer to a question as to

why, from his point of view, education seems to have achieved so little in the solution of our major social problems, he answers:

These are questions calling for far deeper understanding and knowledge than we can bring to bear upon them: We must know much more about the relationships of one individual to another in organized life, and thus about the bearing of attitudes, motivations, character, personality, and the springs of human conduct upon these relationships before we can assert with finality what may be achieved through education of whatever sort.<sup>4</sup>

Let me continue the quotation from the chemist, previously cited:

Our most imperative need in the face of modern science is that science study human beings—the most complex phenomena of which we are aware. If we could understand human beings—we would have gained the kind of insight that is needed.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, when our Congress was last spring considering the establishment of a great federal foundation for support of education to meet these times, the only kind of education recognized was to prepare men in the natural sciences, for, as we incessantly reiterated, "the next war will be won by that nation that has the best scientists. We can fight science only with science." Feeble indeed was the appeal, and quickly brushed aside, that the only defense against a next war may well be in pushing far beyond our present knowledge of man—his values, his springs of conduct, his capacity for control of his life; that in a vast expansion of study and research and educational experiment in the humanities and the social studies may lie our only means of defense against the destruction of organized life as we now know it. As teachers of English we may well give some thought to pressing that fact upon a

<sup>3</sup> Roger J. Williams, *The Human Frontier* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1946).

<sup>4</sup> Floyd H. Allport, unpublished statement.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *op. cit.*

troubled world, turning, as they are, to education in desperate but perhaps unenlightened faith.

But, in pointing out the lack of knowledge that bars the way to any profound and fundamental approach to education for these times as here interpreted, I am not seeking to close the door upon educational effort until such knowledge is achieved. Rather I would urge the importance of a quickening of basic experimentation and of an experimental attitude for all. Faith and sincerity and good will are not enough. Here, as in any field of human endeavor, the mere zealot may be a menace to the cause. With a profound sense of the importance of what we do, we must in the humility of the learner and the objectivity of the scientist seek for answers we now lack.

As a teacher of English, specifically, I need to know what is and can be the effect of literature upon an individual's attitudes, and also, in conjunction with the psychologist and the social scientist, I need to discover what is the relationship between attitudes once formed and the behavior of the one who holds them. Even this question, so basic to any education for these times, we cannot now answer, although hypotheses abound. Moreover, as a teacher of language and its use, I need to know what is the relation between the words one chooses and the attitudes engendered in one's self and others. I need to know what is the effect of expression of a point of view upon the holding of it. I need to know how propaganda and education differ, and what are the uses to be made of each. These are but random examples of the needs of any teacher attempting to educate through English for these times. I repeat that we need the humility of the seeker after light, the objectivity and the method of the scientist, a great expansion

of significant research, and a new scholarship in our subject itself if we are adequately to explore its potentialities as an educational medium in the sense implied by our theme. To provide some opportunity for such consideration and to spur our search, this convention's program has been planned.

One last word on the positive side. It may well be that *realization* of our problems and of our need to know and understand them is one of the most important present steps that can be taken. If this is true, English rises to a place of supreme importance in any educational plan. The social scientist may point out the fact of the institutionalizing of contemporary life and the consequent depersonalizing of human activity, accompanied by loss of the individual's sense of responsibility and the frustrating of natural impulses and the will to do. But for *realization* of this problem—the sort of realization that impels us to ask *why* and *what we can do*—this is brought about either by the experience itself, accompanied by interpretation and analysis, or even more surely by the vivid creation of that experience for us through the power of the artist, especially if conveyed through that most universal form of art—the art of literature.

Stand, for example, with the Oklahoma farmer of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* and watch with him as the irresistible, implacable tractor-driven knives tear up his fields. Feel with him, as you must if you read, the will to stop this deed before it is too late. You must go out and stop them! You'll fight for your land, you'll fight—but whom will you fight? The young man there in the seat of the tractor? He's merely hired to do a day's work. If you beat him, another will take his place tomorrow. The bank that sent him? You cannot fight a bank.

The president, then—the bank's trustees? Each will only tell you, and truly, *he* isn't doing it. What human being can you, a human being, attack and stop? The frustration of individual will, the baffling inability to find the cause or agent of disaster, this through the power of literary art is experienced, realized, as no words of scientist, or sociologist, or statistician can bring to pass.

A high-school boy read the story "Bengi" that appeared in one of our magazines. As he read, he lived with that normal, happy, friendly Negro boy, the only Negro in his small-town school—and with Bengi's grandparents in the home of warmth and love that helped make Bengi the kind of chap he was. He had followed Bengi's career at school, his complete acceptance by his mates, and thus with Bengi experienced the unbelievable shock at the first cold and inexorable drawing of the line against him on the night of the senior ball. With the story in his hand this high-school reader burst in upon his teacher of English, "Have you read this?" he asked. And, then, "Why? Why was Bengi thrust out like that? Why must that be?"

I tell this incident not merely as one more illustration of the power of literary art to give realization of the very essence of problems of these times but because what the teacher did, as she later told it to me, illustrates the point I have tried earlier to make. She said to the boy: "You are asking a most baffling question, the answer to which we do not know. Why it is that men tend to draw race distinctions of many varieties and to set group against group among human kind, we do not know. But the fact that they do creates some of the most serious problems of our day." Then she told him some of the hypotheses, or, as she called them for him, "guesses," as to why race

is made a point of friction among men—the scapegoat hypothesis, the frustration theory, and others, ending with the statement, "Until we know why we behave as we do, we cannot solve these problems of how to live together in one world." The boy listened, she said, an expression of solemn resolution replacing his former emotional strain. "I mean to find out why," he quietly said. Whether or not he will eventually help to do so, I cannot say. But, to my mind, literature and a teacher of English had combined in this instance in a true education with respect to one of the problems of these times.

I said in the beginning that it was not my purpose in this opening address to present my own beliefs or hopes concerning our theme but rather to point out some of the issues and implications that lie within it and to make clear the purpose that led to its adoption. Tonight and tomorrow morning we shall hear what different individuals believe with respect to the several aspects of the subject "English" and their relation to education for the times. On Friday afternoon and Saturday morning we shall have opportunity to study what teachers of English at each level of instruction are actually doing with respect to specific problems of our day. Rejecting none of the other values of English instruction that seem to us important, let us for these next days concentrate our thought upon this one insistent question: Realizing that "the times" are but man's ways of thinking, acting, and living together, and recognizing the limits of our present knowledge of the springs of human conduct, what can we reasonably hope to achieve, uniquely and with others, in educating through English for these times? Whatever else we value, the answer to this urgent question we must seek.

## *It's Earlier than You Think*

THEODORE MORRISON<sup>2</sup>

THE phrase "literature for these times" may be as innocent as a newborn babe or as subtle as a serpent, depending on how it is construed. If it means only that we are teaching literature in the mid-twentieth century and not in the eighteenth, not in Victorian America, not as a final raveling-out of the genteel tradition, not even as a prolongation of the twenties or thirties, I should heartily subscribe to that much of what the phrase implies. But it may contain other and vicious implications. Does it suggest, for example, that educators and teachers are to adopt a quasi-official judgment of the great controversies of our times and select from literature only what may seem most obviously to fortify that judgment? Does it mean that sociology and psychology are to assess the needs of students in modern society and that literature is only to be admitted to the classroom as it can be tortured into support of such assessments? Of the answers that might be given to such questions, I choose here and now to make only one: Such views of literature deny its existence. They deprive it of the integrity and character it possesses in its own right. They put the inquiry in the wrong order. They ask, "How can we use literature?" before asking "What is it? What are the effects, real or presumptive, of reading and studying it as we find it

lying there in its own character, in its own texts and monuments?" Only by respecting the character of his materials can the teacher discover their true use or stand in honest relation toward his subject and his students.

I am here, then, to explore with you the implications of the phrase "literature for these times." Let us begin with the second component of the phrase—"these times." What do we know of our times? What character does the age assume in our thought? An age can be characterized by its events, by the social forces that shape or convulse it, by the quality of its life at various levels, by the products it casts up—whether tools, ideas, religions, or achievements of art and science—and, finally, by its desires, conflicts, and controversies. How can a mere English teacher draw the comprehensive character of his times? How can I, the most ignorant of a species all too often submissive, credulous, and ill-informed outside our own small, special diggings? What are we doing—we—rolling on our tongues this phrase "literature for these times"?

Well, I will venture to remind you at least of an event and of a number of controversies and conflicts and of the desires and obstacles that go with them. The event is the war—the total war that we say is past, the little wars into which it is raveling out in Palestine, in eastern Europe, in China, and which threaten to coalesce again at some future time into another and even more savagely total

<sup>1</sup> An address to the opening session of the National Council of Teachers of English, in Atlantic City, November 28, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer on English and director of English A, Harvard University.

war. Surely war—past, present, or to come—overshadows every other consideration in our thought of our age. Surely, every controversy, every desire, every conflict we can name to ourselves is entangled with war as cause, concomitant, effect, or all three at once. What are some of these desires, controversies, and conflicts? The great and overmastering desire is for peace, a desire prompted by almost every consideration of reason, emotion, or ethic (I say “almost” advisedly). But this desire itself, genuine as it is, prompts controversy. “One World,” we say longingly. E. B. White waves before us the Wild Flag, the natural standard that grows everywhere, in all geographies, in all climates, among all races. But the way toward One World, if we truly want it, is controversial, and from controversy comes outright conflict. The case could be put the other way round just as well: from conflict of interests and fears comes controversy over ends and methods. Elmer Davis tells us bluntly and courageously that no world would be better than one world if our one world turned out to be “totalitarian and obscurantist.”

Other generous, necessary, indispensable desires are characteristic of the times: the desire to organize society so that its fruits may be fairly spread; the desire to give opportunity to the Negro and to relieve the Jew of oppression and discrimination; the desire to promote and secure individual human rights everywhere. But there are obstacles to these desires. Human nature has not been freed from sloth, indifference, or avarice; beyond these moral obstacles, real conflicts of interest exist; from these come controversy over ends and methods. All these desires and conflicts are entangled with the problem of war. For six years

both the best things and the worst things done in the world have been done in war or in relation to it. War is caused by, is a cause of, intensifies, perpetuates, and again may result from, the permutations of such conflicts. Warfare has become more than it ever was in the past an application of science. Another set of desires and controversies turns on the problem of how to take advantage of science without incurring destruction; but, in the meanwhile, science goes on contributing to the ingenuity and terror of war. Radar bounces back from the moon; cunning instruments ascend into the ionosphere and bring back reports packed with the capacity for destruction. How control the effects of man's insuperable curiosity—or should they be controlled?

One striking characteristic of the vocal, the editorial, part of our age is the impulse to cry out, “It is a race against time! It's later than you think!” Now is the day of salvation. Tomorrow, if we do not swallow the dose—either socialism or one world and an end to sovereignty or what you will—we shall all be damned. We shall be dead, or, if any survive, they will be as men of the Stone Age or, by a stretch of hope, the dark ages before Western civilization nurtured itself to life. It is said that men for the first time in their long history have it within their physical power to make a single world of plenty and security for all but that the price of refusal or failure will be extinction or reversion to virtual barbarism. The glitter of possibility is played off against the mushroom cloud of menace, and the choice is now, *hora novissima*—the hour is late, the time of judgment is at hand.

I am not one to deny this prognostic by any authority of science or special knowledge. I do not even intend to dis-

cuss it beyond raising a question. My question is simply this: When have we ever had assurance that our desires would be fulfilled? Even our greatest desire of all, the desire for peace, will that certainly be fulfilled? Is it relevant to ask in what way we might undertake to prepare ourselves and prepare our students and sons and daughters if it should not be?

And this brings me to the first component in the phrase I am discussing, the word "literature." What is literature and what does it seem to say to an age characterized, as ours is, by war, by the fear of war, by concern for human rights, by desire to exploit science without incurring destruction, by all the conflicts and controversies that go with these desires and fears?

If there is one proposition to which we may expect a minimum of dissent, it may well be the proposition that education is important. Sometimes, a little pompously, we say that on the success of education depends the future of democracy, of peace, of human rights and human security everywhere on our shrunken planet. Such a claim probably puts the case too solemnly and extravagantly. But we all agree, no doubt, that education at the lowest estimate is important. We are considering, I take it, the place of literature in an education addressed to modern societies and their precarious future. I would lay it down as the root and starting-point of the whole discussion that when we think of the place of literature in education, we must think of literature as a whole, or enough of it to be representative. None of us knows literature as a whole; we all hope we know enough of it to be fairly representative of the whole.

I would lay it down as the next point that the authority of literature as a

whole cannot be claimed in support of any one view on any one side of any profound or lasting controversy. Literature is the very point at which controversy boils into notable expression. It is the serenity of form and phrase, the heart-searching and perfected image, that remain when the impassioned scum has cleared; but that serenity is found on all sides and hence on none. Do not mistake my meaning. Literature expresses allegiances, and men cannot live without allegiance. I am not speaking in favor of that kind of liberal mind which calls itself liberal because it evades all commitments. I have said in pessimistic moments that a university is a place where all ideas are entertained and none is believed. Without allegiance, no character. But literature, as a whole, expresses many different allegiances. I will hazard the statement, at the risk of inconsistency, that great literature always puts a price tag on commitments. It presents the allegiances by which men live not only as reward but as cost. Belief has a cost; any positive belief excludes men of other persuasions; that is perhaps why a certain kind of miseducated man sets up an appearance of indulging all beliefs and committing himself to none, while the truly educated man forms a deep commitment and forms it slowly, aware of its cost not only to himself but potentially to the world, since belief both unifies and divides, and division is conflict, and conflict is not an idle business.

The purpose of reading is not to avoid beliefs; but literature, taken as a whole or representatively, does not teach, inculcate, or support any single view of life or any one side of even the greatest controversy. Is Plato right, or is Aristotle? Shall man live for the hereafter, under the eye of God, or now, by a prudential

ethic, by a calculus of pleasure and pain? Who had the better of it, Antony or Caesar? Does justification lie in the fanatical pursuit of the White Whale or in the meliorism that pieces together those minor compensations allowed us by the irony of circumstance?

Of course, in its great library showcase, time has arranged many exhibitions of partisan literature, from Isaiah to the *Partisan Review*. It is all partisan, all commitment, in a sense. I suppose that much of the imperishable library we have in the Old Testament constitutes a partisan literature. It is bitterly partisan on behalf of the chosen people of God. And so dramatic is the great myth of that partisanship that, among many other groups, the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony identified themselves with it all over again. They, in turn, were the chosen people; they, in their turn, drew up a covenant, a whole system of covenants, and politely allowed a sovereign God to issue it to them over his signature as if all the time he had thought of it himself and coded it into the one reputed volume of his authorship. Down South lived another race in bondage, and the Negro learned from the non-Jewish white to sing of his Egyptian captivity and his hope of deliverance:

O Mary, don't you weep, don't you mourn,  
'Cause Pharoah's army got drowned  
In the Red Sea.

Great partisanship has great uses. But the question is whether literature *as a whole* gives its exclusive support and assent to any one judgment on any one issue. Take the great complex of desire, controversy, and conflict that subsumes, if anything does, our own age: peace, one world, the security of human rights for all men. Are we going to get there? Think of some of the great strains in literature and ask the secrecy of your own minds

whether, as a whole, it gives any one answer. There is a great strain of literature that we may call the "prophetic" or "visionary." The children of Israel, it says, shall pass over into the Promised Land. If they stray from the covenant and are expelled from Canaan, a Messiah shall come to restore their kingdom on earth. Prometheus shall be unbound. Those who are born free but are everywhere in chains shall be liberated. The vision is a great one. It can shake a man's flesh as he reads. But it is not the only voice of literature. Its premise is not the premise of Swift or Calvin or Freud. Echoes of the controversy perturb the air today. Shall we trust ourselves as men of good will and trust other nations also? If so, we ought to open the armory of our military secrets and publish the mysteries, so that none may be excluded and no dreadful weapon need ever be used, because fear and distrust have been taken away. But on another estimate of human nature, our own or other people's, we may well think twice, and we are so warned by men who are not conspicuous for ill-will or ungenerous in disposition. Literature is not all idealism; far from it.

What the world's million lips are thirsting for  
Must be substantial somewhere.

So speaks the voice of the ideal, the voice of the Romantic. Reality must somewhere, at some time, be found in correspondence with the vision of the heart. But there is another side, another voice. We may call it the "worldly voice," or the "voice of the reality principle." What the million lips of Troilus thirsted for was substantial in the person of Cressida, but Cressida was false. He stood on the walls with Pandarus, looking out over the Trojan plain until evening fell, and thinking that every figure that came into sight was Cressida:

"And Pandarus, now will you believe me? I see her! There she is! Heave up your eyes and look, man, can't you see?"

"All wrong, by God," Pandarus answered. "What are you saying, man? Where are you? All I see over there is just some traveller's cart."

"You are right," says Troilus. "But all the same it's not for nothing that I have such a feeling of assurance now at heart. She'll come tonight, I'll bet my life on that."

Pandarus agreed with all he said, but in his heart laughed softly, and thought, "All that you wait for here will come from the woods where jolly Robin Hood had his fun. Yes, farewell to the snows of yesteryear."

The referee must award that round to worldly wisdom and not to the vision of the heart.

But if literature taken as a whole or representatively supports no single view of life or gives no united judgment in favor of any one side in any controversy, what, then, is its value to education in these times when the right issue of controversy may be more important than ever before? Well, an English teacher who cannot confidently answer that question ought to be in some other business. But I will venture a couple of statements.

I believe that literature is inescapably moral and that reading it and studying it have a moral effect, which is among the most important reasons for its place in education, if not the most important reason of all. Yet it is difficult to state in what way literature is moral and what moral effect it exerts without opening one's self to deadly misconstruction. It has long been a vice of teachers to prefer the didactic in literature and to torture the rest of it to didactic uses. This vice is no less Philistine and stupid now than it has been always. Literature does not make us better neighbors or kinder to animals, or, if it does, that is not the main intention. It does not keep us from thieving, lying, or breaking the Sabbath,

if we are so inclined. It is not a course in the training of habits, not a set of gymnasium rules for practical moral development. I do not think that the spectacle of what happened to Macbeth, who stole a kingdom, will keep an adolescent from stealing a bicycle, nor that it is meant to. Another and superior moral effect *Macbeth*, taken with a lot of other reading, may well have, just about to the extent that the student is capable of responding to it as a poem and a dramatic presentation of experience.

What is this effect? First, let us get it clear that literature *is* inescapably moral. That is, the great stories that form the pictorial and emotional record of man's experience take place in a moral world, a world in which actions and feelings are connected with each other and successively lead to favorable or unfavorable states of the individual and collective consciousness. What are fear, anger, hope, loss, laughter, taken in all the interplay of their causes and contrasts and effects, if they are not moral states? How could either comedy or tragedy, the discursive impulse or the lyrical, be intelligible or communicate itself in words unless it involved the moral interplay of hope, cruelty, delight, wonder, and reflection that make up the moral complexion of the world we live in? Literature is moral because it exists through the aesthetic delight of recognition; and what is there in human experience to recognize except good and bad, favorable and unfavorable states, both to individuals and to masses and societies? Literature is moral whether it means to be or not; to be intelligible it has to be moral. The writer who withdraws from the world to a spiritual cell or to an ivory tower, the writer who disowns any attempt to distinguish between good and evil, the corrupt writer whose relish is for

disgust—all in their way are giving expression to moral states and moral judgments on the world and cannot help doing so.

But if literature is inescapably moral, it presents us with a moral variety and not a moral unity. I do not know of any one good life that literature exclusively supports or commends to our sympathy. The struggle between good and evil is incessant, but ideas of good and evil are anything but uniform. And literature is moral in ways that may well shock the moralist and frequently do shock and perturb the adolescent student. Its approach to good is as often as not through evil. It shows men fighting, grasping, whoring, despairing, betraying their gods and their humanity. Its morality, if we take enough of it to be representative, is inclusive, tolerant, insatiably curious, humorous as well as tragic, ready to make the upright man a butt and the just man a fool, giving the devil his due and even the coward his measure. "There's place and means for every man alive," says one of Shakespeare's poltroons at the very moment of his disgrace and exposure. "The poor abuses of the time want countenance," says Falstaff. Publicans and sinners make better company than saints, no less often in books than in life.

Here, then, is the moral effect of the study of literature. It is not a school of good habits or social adjustment or practical success or even ideal virtue; it is a universal library, a comprehensive thesaurus of cases for recognition. Its effect is not to confirm moral codes; far more probably it will liberalize, stretch, and distend any rigid code that comes before it. We do not go to it protectively but adventurously, not to preserve and keep sacrosanct the little bundle of habits and preconceptions we have been given in our

first narrow training and experience in life but to learn how men in far times and in near, in home regions and in alien, have thought, felt, laughed, suffered, and judged. What is the worst danger that we in our times could conceivably face? Scientific power and moral illiteracy—the power over society that comes from science and the ignorance of man's nature that comes from neglect of his spoken record. One great purpose of teaching literature, a purpose great enough to mention alone, though other purposes may be equally important, is to prevent moral illiteracy. For that purpose we must think of literature as a whole, or enough of it to be representative, and this means literature of the remote and middle past, of Europe and Asia, as well as literature of the recent past and of the present and of our own country.

Another generalization I will hazard about literature. From the passage of the children of Israel through the Red Sea to the migration of the Okies in *The Grapes of Wrath*, we have had a literature of masses, peoples, and societies. But great literature, it seems to me, has always taken the individual to heart. As good a motto for the main concern of literature as I know might be found in the simple words of Conrad about Lord Jim: "Because of his feelings, he mattered." Why else does Job matter, or King Lear, or Hector, or Captain Ahab? I have declared that the whole of literature cannot be tapped for united support on behalf of any one view of life, but I will risk the exception and the inconsistency. The individual human life has value and deserves respect, if I can read the testimony of literature correctly. The individual life may be contemptible physically and temporally as compared with the universe; it may reach its highest

nobility in self-transcendent dedication to a belief or a cause greater than any individual. But because of its feelings it matters; and if it did not, no psalm or sonnet, no play or novel, would ever be written. If you find political or controversial implication in this plank of mine, make the most of it.

Literature, then, must be considered in its own character and in its entirety when we think of its place in education. If we listen to it as it speaks in its own right, we can hardly help hearing two voices. One is prophetic; it tells us that choice lies in our hands, the hour is now, the power and the destiny lie within our own competence to pass over into the promised land, to make one world of plenty and security for all. The other tells us that the struggle between good

and evil is perpetual, that suffering is the one constant of all lives among all peoples, that the desires of the heart never gain total fulfilment, and that men must respond to the imperfections and cruelties of their existence as best they can and may. In terms of man's moral nature, says the second voice, it is earlier than you think, or the time is neither early nor late; it is simply always. We can be sure of comedy and tragedy, but we cannot be sure of the promised land.

I cannot tell you which voice to accept. That must be the decision of your own natures. But, if you listen to literature, you will discover both, and one will remind you of the other. In that very fact may lie a great virtue; it may well be that both voices are needed in these times, as in all times.

### *Announcement*

The National Council of Teachers of English, the Association of American Colleges, and the American Library Association announce the appointment of Charlton G. Laird, head of the department of English of the University of Nevada, to take over the editorship of the *Guide to Comparative Literature and Intercultural Relations*, to which some one hundred and twenty-five scholars throughout the country are contributing, entirely on a voluntary basis. Work has been considerably slowed down since the sudden and untimely death last summer of Dr. Arthur Christy, who, as editor-in-chief, was one of the prime movers in the organization of this ambitious project. George E. Parks and James E. Tobin, associate editors with Dr. Christy, will continue in that capacity, and there will also be formed a small advisory group of scholars. It is expected that the rather sizable book growing out of this project, and to be published by the American Library Association with the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, will appear some time in 1948.

## *Implications of Modern Linguistic Science<sup>1</sup>*

CHARLES C. FRIES<sup>2</sup>

LET me begin with something like a confession. In the early days of my graduate study I suddenly came upon what was to me a "new world," a discovery that eventually changed my whole view of language and grammar. This discovery—this "new world" to me—was "modern linguistic science," that is, the principles and the techniques first used in western Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century for the study of linguistic relationships and then developed and applied more widely by the great scholars in language ever since that time. This "new world" of modern linguistic science differed startlingly from the linguistic world that I had formerly come in contact with through my teachers in high school and in college; and it seemed to me as revolutionary as the Copernican system in astronomy, the germ theory of disease in medicine, or the study of molecular structure in physics.

I wondered why I had not discovered it before—why, after more than a hundred years of tremendous achievement in linguistic study, based upon an increasingly exact and exacting method, the results of that study had not been utilized in the schools and incorporated in our general culture. In practically all other fields, our schools, in most parts of this country, had welcomed scientific studies

and the results of scientific research; but in matters of language, eighteenth-century authoritarian attitudes and naïve and prescientific views still continued and vigorously resisted any correction by scientific procedures.

My own adjustment to this "new world" was not easy and required time. Ever since that first discovery, however, much of my energy has been given to a struggle to keep abreast of the achievements in modern linguistic science and to explore the implications of the results of scientific linguistic study for our practical problems of teaching.

Adjustments involving the giving-up of naïve or prescientific views are always slow and difficult. We must remember that "science" always contradicts man's naïve observations. Man saw the earth as flat; science proved it to be round, and man was forced to deny his direct naïve observation in favor of the conclusions arrived at by indirect evidence. Man saw the sun, the moon, and the stars revolve about the earth; but science proved that it is the earth that spins on its axis, and again man was compelled to deny the conclusions of his direct observations. In a scientific world seeing is not believing. Things are not what they seem.

The more a science advances, the less intelligible it is to the layman. Linguistic science is no exception. The first step of modern linguistic science—the use of a phonological technique for establishing a sound basis for conclusions concerning linguistic relationships and linguistic his-

<sup>1</sup> An address to the opening session of the National Council of Teachers of English, in Atlantic City, November 28, 1946.

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tory—removed a large part of language study from the competence of the literary scholar; the advances in linguistic science of the last twenty years—the modern “structural approach”—have so changed the point of view, the methods, and the vocabulary of recent linguistic work that many of the older linguistic scholars, those who were trained more than fifteen years ago and have not struggled hard to keep up with the new developments, find it almost impossible even to read the newer studies.

Unfortunately, in discussions of matters of language in groups of teachers such as this, the issues drawn are not those of science in opposition to those of prescience but are usually thought of as simply involving “conservatives,” on the one hand, and “radicals,” on the other. The conservatives are thought of as those who stand for correctness, who insist that “it is the part of the schools to teach the language strictly according to rule . . . rather than to encourage questionable liberties of usage.” The radicals are thought of as those who would follow an easier path and accept all sorts of “errors” whenever these “errors” are widespread—a policy which the “conservatives” believe would undermine the defenses against the “wretched English heard everywhere” and allow the floods of crudity to wipe out all accuracy of expression and sensitivity to elegance.

Often the linguistic scientist is classed with the radicals as one who uses his scholarship to overturn established practices. But he really belongs to neither of these groups. In the practical matters of language he is neither a conservative nor a radical. He has devoted himself to the difficult task of discovering and describing the intricate and complicated mechanisms which the language actually uses

in fulfilling its communicative function. As a scientist he is searching for pure knowledge. To know the facts and to understand language processes are to him ends in themselves. He usually leaves to others the business of applying practically the knowledge that he has won. But sometimes (if he has some missionary zeal) he does venture to attempt to discuss with teachers in the schools or with those who must deal with language in a practical way the applications of some of his materials, and then he is brought face to face with views and modes of thinking and teaching practices which are fundamentally at variance with the principles upon which his science has been operating for one hundred and thirty years, principles upon which his whole activity is based. He meets views vigorously held that rest on pre-scientific assumptions, which for him were long ago proved untenable. He tries, then, out of some of the accumulations of his science, to challenge and to dispose of some of these views. He feels keenly the need of clearing the ground of these misconceptions before he can begin to have the meeting of minds necessary for him to make any positive contribution. Too often, however, he is compelled to spend so much of every opportunity in this negative procedure that many (perhaps many of you) believe that the linguistic scientist's chief business is dealing with matters of disputed usage—to determine authoritatively whether “It is me” can now be accepted as correct; whether the rules for *shall* and *will* are now outmoded; whether *everybody* can be referred to by *they*. But an examination of the shibboleths of the classroom does not constitute any large part of the matters to which the linguistic scientist gives attention. It is true that, if given a chance to contribute from his experience

and knowledge, he can shed light upon questions of this kind; but there are, in the accumulations built up by the devoted work of many linguistic scholars, the materials that can lighten the burdens of the teachers and increase the effectiveness of the schools in a variety of other matters.

Let me attempt to make more definite the meaning of some of these statements and display something of the more recent developments in this linguistic world that captured my devotion more than thirty years ago. I can deal with but three matters by way of illustration: (1) language history, (2) structural linguistics, and (3) formal signals of structural meaning.

#### I. LANGUAGE HISTORY

Constant change—in word meanings, in pronunciation, and in grammatical structure—is the normal condition of every language (as far as we know) spoken by a living people. The developing of a rigorous technique for the study of this change constituted the first step in “modern linguistic science” and has given us linguistic history. A hundred years of careful scientific study have been devoted to establishing the history of the English language from the time of the earliest recorded texts to the present time—a period of about a thousand years. This detailed history of English has upset many of our naïve and pre-scientific notions concerning language changes.

These changes, for example, are not corruptions that can or should be prevented—by academies, dictionaries, or grammars. They do not arise from the “mistakes” of the uneducated. In fact, the speech of the uneducated changes much more slowly than does the speech of the educated group. Nearly all the

grammatical forms that are called “mistakes” in the speech of the uneducated are simply surviving forms from older periods of the English language. The double negative, for example, as in “They didn’t take no oil with them,” was in Old English the normal stressed negative. Chaucer often used the multiple negative. The Modern English equivalent of one sentence in his description of the Knight is “He never yet no unfit speech didn’t say to no kind of man.” The form *clumb* in “He clumb up a tree” is older than the Standard Modern English *climbed*. *Climb* is one of 129 so-called “strong” verbs that have, in Modern English, all changed to the pattern of the “weak” (regular) verbs. In similar fashion “She went down town *for to* buy a hat” and “It’s three *mile* down the next road” survive from older periods of English in the speech of the uneducated.

At no time during the thousand years of the history of English are the recorded texts lacking in evidence of changes actually in progress. There are always points upon which usage is divided. But as far as the evidence goes, neither the practices of the uneducated nor the conscious choices of the educated have had any affect whatever upon these changes. From the point of view of history looking back, they fit into large patterns developing over long periods of time.

A grasp of the constant change in word meanings and the areas of their use has also forced us to turn away from the methods of “authority,” as they are represented in Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* and its modern successors, to the methods represented in that great monument to the patient recording of the facts of usage, the *Oxford Dictionary*.

The older views of word meanings still live, however, and show themselves in frequent naïve proposals which must be

rejected in spite of the worthy impulses that prompt them.

An example of what I mean is contained in an editorial in the *Detroit Free Press* of June 11, 1945. The editor first comments on the time that "has been wasted at the United Nations conference, arguing over the meaning of this or that word in this or that language." He then insists that we need "honest speech"—a language in which "no word has more than one meaning and everybody knows what that meaning is." He ends with this proposal: "Let each word in every document mean what it says in any language and then proclaim that meaning to all mankind."

A mere glance at the *Oxford Dictionary* should have discouraged him. For the 500 most-used words in English (according to the Thorndike *Word Book*) the *Oxford Dictionary* records and illustrates, from our literature, 14,070 separate meanings; for the first 1,000, the number is well over 25,000.<sup>3</sup> And no words except highly technical words have precisely the same area of meaning in two languages. We must learn to live with the language as it is, not try to dodge or ignore the multitude of difficulties arising from its constant change.

## 2. STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS

The special development of linguistic science of the last twenty years has been what can be called "structural linguistics." This new approach has also changed many of our earlier views concerning what is significant in language and what is not. It insists that language must not be dealt with as if it were a collection of separate items but rather as an integrated system—that the items

have significance only as they function in the system as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

Just as the earlier linguistic science developed a rigorous technique for dealing with language change as the basis for historical study, so the more recent linguistics has developed a rigorous technique of structural analysis for descriptive study. It was first used in the analysis of the phonological systems of living languages but is now being applied to all the features of language. It can most easily be illustrated in matters of pronunciation. The human vocal apparatus can make, and we can isolate and describe, thousands of different sounds. In any single language the actual number of distinctly different sounds is far greater than is usually supposed. There are many differences of sound of which the speaker himself is entirely unaware. In English, e.g., the *p* of *pin* is quite different from the *p* of *spin*, and both are different from the *p* in *nip* or *top*. The *p* of *pin* is followed by a puff of breath which the others do not have. The [k] in *kill* is very different from the [k] in *coal*. Although both are followed by a characteristic puff of breath, the [k] of *kill* is made with the back of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth much farther forward than with the [k] of *coal*. The [k] of *cool* is still different—it is made with rounded lips.

Phonetic analysis has in the past devoted itself to distinguishing and describing minutely such differences of sound. For structural analysis, however, we are not satisfied with this type of phonetic analysis of separate items. We want to know which of the hundreds of different sounds noted and described are significant in the system of the language—

<sup>3</sup> See Fries and Traver, *English Word Lists* (American Council on Education, 1940), pp. 80-82.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Vilem Mathesius, "On Some Problems of the Systematic Analysis of Grammar," *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague*, No. 6 (1936), p. 96.

which, for example, are used by the language as the sole distinguishing features of different words, as the difference between [s] and [z] in *ice—eyes* and *race—raise*, in technical terms, which of the phonetic differences are “phonemic.”

We know now, that, although the total numbers of different sounds in a language may run up into thousands, no language that has been described uses more than twenty to fifty of these different sounds to distinguish meanings or to separate words; and no two languages use precisely the same set.

We in English use very freely the difference noted above between [s] and [z]: *cease—seize*; *niece—knees*; *lacy—lazy*; *seal—zeal*; or the difference between [n] and [ŋ] as in *sin—sing*; *kin—king*; *ran—rang*. Spanish has these sounds but never uses either of them as we do as the sole difference to distinguish meanings. We in English use [i] and [ɪ] as in *heat—hit*; *seat—sit*; and [e] and [ɛ] as in *mate—met*; *bait—bet*. Again, Spanish never uses these differences to distinguish meanings.

These facts have very practical significance. If two sounds are distinctive points on the “pattern” in my language, i.e., are used to distinguish meanings, then it is easy for me to hear somewhat similar differences in another language and to make them systematically. If, however, the two sounds in my language are never used to distinguish meanings—are simply positional variants of one distinctive sound—then they are very difficult for me even to hear in learning another language where they are distinctive.

Our efforts to describe the complete system of a language in which the sounds operate have revealed another significant matter. Not only are the distinctive sound features of a language very few in number; we know now that they occur

only in a very limited number of characteristic sequences. The sound [ŋ], as in *king*, *sing*, *rang*, occurs only after vowels; it never occurs initially in a word. English has 39 consonant clusters that occur initially and 151 postvocalic or final consonant clusters. Only three, however—*st*, *sp*, and *sk*—occur in initial as well as final position.

These facts also have practical significance. It is easy for me, for example, to pronounce sounds in the characteristic sequences in which they occur in my language; it is extremely difficult for me to pronounce sounds in sequences which do not occur in the patterns of my language.

Final [ŋ], as in *king* is easy; but to pronounce this word in reverse, starting with [ŋ] without a preceding vowel requires practice [ŋɪk]. To pronounce the cluster *gd* at the beginning of a word as in *Gdynia* (the Polish port) is hard; we have no difficulty however, with this combination after vowels, as in *tagged*, *wagged*, *bagged*, *sagged*.

In the past we have talked much of the ease and difficulty of language sounds and sound combinations, assuming that the ease or the difficulty was attached to the phonetic nature of the sound itself—its mode of articulation. We know now that there are no difficult language sounds per se and that there are no minute differences of sound. Ease or difficulty of pronunciation turns out to be a matter of the patterning of the sound features in the characteristic sequences of a language.

Structural linguistics with its rigorous technique is revealing much that is of significance for many of our practical problems. It is the kind of analysis that lies back of our new approach to the teaching of English as a foreign language and other foreign-language teaching to

English-speaking students. It can make a special contribution in the building of new and more effective materials for the teaching of reading.

### 3. FORMAL SIGNALS OF STRUCTURAL MEANING

The practices of the schools, on the one hand, and those of modern linguistic science, on the other, nowhere offer a sharper contrast than in the treatment of the sentence. Our common school textbooks almost unanimously repeat the familiar definition: "A sentence is a group of words expressing a complete thought." But these school textbooks never really come to grips with the problem of just what a thought (in this sense) is, and what makes it complete. Nor do the 140 other definitions of the sentence collected by John Ries,<sup>5</sup> or the 83 "important" ones discussed by Eugen Seidel.<sup>6</sup> Professor Allan H. Gardiner does not help us very much when, after more than a hundred pages on the "Theory of the Sentence," he leaves us with the statement that "a sentence is an utterance which makes just as long a communication as the speaker has intended to make before giving himself a rest."<sup>7</sup>

Our students are usually left with the vague admonition to develop "a sentence sense," which one series of textbooks insists can be accomplished by a practice of "feeling out" the sentences to see whether "the thought is complete or not." In actual practice, however, the student meets independent utterances which range in size from single words like "Waiter," "Boy," "Jump," to something over four thousand words (see, e.g., the 1943 report of the President of Columbia

University in which there is a single sentence covering eleven large pages and containing within itself nine paragraph divisions). It is impossible to prescribe or to describe the requirements of independent utterances in English in terms of meaning content. The completeness of an utterance is a matter of form not of thought. In the expression "the barking dog," an actor is named (the dog), and an action is ascribed to him (barking). In English, however, this expression is not a sentence. On the other hand, the expression, "The dog is barking" is a sentence—not because it contains any more "thought" than the expression "the barking dog" but because it has the formal characteristics which our language requires in one type of independent utterance. So also, "Who the man is" and "Why he will come" are not independent sentences in English but "Who is the man?" and "Why will he come?"—which use exactly the same words in slightly different order—are sentences, because they do have the formal characteristics required for this type of independent utterance.

From the point of view of modern linguistic science each language has its own set of formal characteristics of independent utterances. The patterns of these formal characteristics can be accurately described and can provide for our students a definite set of criteria, instead of the vague admonitions with which our teachers have labored so long.

Let me, further, in illustration of my point look at just one other matter concerning the sentence. In any utterance there are always several levels of meaning. In the sentence "The old man killed the little bears" there are, first of all, the meanings of the words themselves, as the dictionary records them. We can find in the dictionary, for example, the kinds

<sup>5</sup> *Was ist ein Satz?* (rev. ed.; Prague, 1931).

<sup>6</sup> *Geschichte und Kritik der wichtigsten Satzdefinitionen* (Jena, 1935).

<sup>7</sup> *Theory of Speech and Language* (Oxford, 1932), p. 208.

of creatures referred to by the words *man* and *bears*, and the kinds of qualities referred to by the words *old* and *little* and the kind of action indicated by the word *kill*. But in this utterance, "The old man killed the little bears," there is more meaning than the dictionary records concerning the words themselves. We receive a whole range of what can be called "structural meanings." The sentence tells us, for instance that it is the man who performed the action upon the bears, not the bears upon the man; that it is the man that is old and the bears that are little; that the information is given as a fact, not questioned and not something requested.

The total meaning of the utterance includes all these matters of information. Every utterance thus includes, first, lexical meanings and, second, structural meanings. Structural meanings are not vague matters of the "context," so called; they are the fundamentally important part of every utterance, and they are always signaled by the forms and arrangement of the words in a rather intricate system. It is the business of the linguist—the grammarian particularly—to discover what these signals are and the system through which they operate.

Let me point out that this procedure is precisely the opposite of that usually employed in the schools, in the so-called "analysis" of sentences. This procedure starts with the formal signals and by means of these signals arrives at the total meaning. In the analysis as practiced in the schools, the student must know the total meaning of the utterance (or sentence) before he can begin to operate.

In our sentence, "The old man killed the little bears," he would proceed to say: "*Man* is subject because the man performs the action"; "*bears* is object

because they receive the action"; and so on.

The process is simply that of giving technical names to various parts of the meaning that he already knows. He is never taught the special code by which the English language signals these structural meanings of its utterances—the code that could become a definite means of self-criticism and revision for the sentences constructed by the student.

The world of modern linguistic science still differs tremendously from the linguistic world of the English classroom in the schools. In fact, it differs even more than it did formerly. In the schools are hosts of excellent teachers, with high ideals, devoted to the best interests of their pupils. In the teaching of English, even in our times, these teachers are still giving more time to a study of grammar and usage than to almost any other aspect of English. Unfortunately, from the point of view of modern linguistic science, much of this work is not only wasted time but harmful practice, as well. It is wasted time because it employs methods and materials that could not possibly attain the ends desired, no matter how much time was given to English. It is harmful practice because the habits set up and the views inculcated turn the students away from the only source of real knowledge—the actual language of the people about them. Our students are practically never given the tools of observation and analysis necessary to the use of these resources.

The problems of English for our times demand the pooling of all our different types of knowledge and experience. We cannot afford to neglect an exploration of the practical usefulness of the materials built up over a long period by modern linguistic science.

## *The Survey Course at the University of Missouri*

CHARLES M. HUDSON, JR.,<sup>2</sup> AND EDWARD H. WEATHERLY<sup>3</sup>

THE college survey course in English literature has long been a favorite target for pedagogical darts. It is true that the necessity for covering a vast amount of material in a short time has led to abuses. The assignments are too long for thorough analysis; the pace often becomes absurdly breathtaking; and the teacher is forced to toss off critical generalities the superficiality of which makes him shudder.

One common complaint arises from the prevalence of the lecture method in teaching the course. Not only are classes frequently too large for effective student participation, but the teacher is fearful of the delay which discussion often imposes. Class discussion is hard to keep within bounds; let the hand of the pilot falter, and the ship goes aground in the shallows of irrelevancy. How much easier for the instructor to roll out his well-turned sentences (unchanged from the previous year), to read long passages in superb cadences, and so to enjoy fifty minutes of delicious freedom from awkward challenges, foolish questions, and inane comments!

To be sure, skilful lecturing and effective reading aloud have their place. But we at the University of Missouri are convinced that students profit more from taking part in the discussion of works of

literature than they do from listening (or not listening) to lectures about them. Valuable as a limited use of lecturing may be, its exclusive use is likely to lead to the students' accepting the teacher's ex-cathedra pronouncements without doing any independent thinking. The best teaching is primarily *evocative*; the larger share of interpreting a literary work should be the student's. This does not mean that the sole function of the instructor is mere question-asking. In the verbal interplay of student and teacher, the latter will take the lead in comment and interpretation. He will agree; he will contradict; he will qualify; he will give background material; he will read to illustrate; he will sum up and elaborate. But he is not there to impose his thinking in a lump upon a group of silent acolytes with their pencils reverently poised. He is there to help the students help themselves—a purpose which unrelieved lecturing rarely, if ever, fulfils.

Let us drop into Jesse Hall and look in on Section 22 of English 40 (the last half of the survey). The assignment for the day is *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Andrea del Sarto*. The roll (of thirty-three students) has just been called.

INSTRUCTOR: A distinguished little group had gathered together at the temporary Browning residence in London on September 27, 1855. Besides the Brownings themselves (who had come to England to see Robert's *Men and Women* through the press), there were the poet laureate, Alfred Tennyson, and the two

<sup>1</sup> This report was submitted at the request of the editor.

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<sup>3</sup> Professor of English and chairman of the department, University of Missouri.

Rossetti brothers, Gabriel and William Michael. First, Tennyson read "Maud," unaware that, all the while, D. G. Rossetti was drawing a sketch of him. Then it was Browning's turn. He read *Fra Lippo Lippi*. It was a wise, bold choice; for, as Professor DeVane says, no other poem of Browning better presents his own approach to life and art or more vigorously illustrates the fresh, new elements he was introducing into English poetry.

Later in life, when Browning was asked to read from his poetry, he was more likely to choose *Andrea del Sarto*, perhaps because he had come to think of it as the most nearly perfect of his dramatic monologues.

These are the two poems which we are studying today.

All the qualities which we talked about last time as making an effective dramatic monologue are found at their finest in these two poems. Moreover, both of these pieces reveal much of Browning himself—not only his love of Italian life and art but also much of his attitude toward his own life and art. Finally, reading them together, one is shocked into a sudden awareness of Browning's amazing versatility. As "tone poems," two pieces could hardly be further apart; and the prevailing mood of each is set with consummate artistry. What would you say, Miss Akers,<sup>4</sup> is the essential contrast between the two poems?

MISS AKERS: Well, I'd say that *Fra Lippo Lippi* is peppy and *Andrea del Sarto* is sort of slow and sad.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes. Can you elaborate that a bit?

MISS AKERS: *Fra Lippo Lippi* is full of life and zest. He likes people. He likes to get out and have a good time. But An-

dre<sup>a</sup> is melancholy and kind of wistful. His voice sounds tired and maybe disillusioned.

INSTRUCTOR: Good. Mr. Turner?

MR. TURNER: Andrea is what we would call a "sad apple" or a "droop" today. He needs some vitamin B. [*Laughter.*]

INSTRUCTOR: Mr. Turner, as a teacher of English I am supposed to deplore your slang; but, as a critic of literature, I appreciate your insight! I think we shall find, however, on further analysis that Andrea's apathy goes deeper than vitamin-starvation.

MR. TURNER: *Cherchez la femme!*

INSTRUCTOR: Mr. Turner, remind me to speak to the French Department about your accent! Well, yes, Lucrezia is partly to blame, but the trouble lies even deeper, I think. However, we are getting ahead of ourselves. We were talking about the startling contrast in mood and tone between these two poems. Professor William Lyon Phelps says that *Fra Lippo Lippi* is *dynamic*, whereas *Andrea del Sarto* is *static*, that going from the first to the second is like going from a blustery March day to a mild autumn twilight.

Why, then, Miss Cauthorn, is *Andrea del Sarto* an even more astonishing production for Robert Browning than *Fra Lippo Lippi*?

MISS CAUTHORN: I'm not sure what you mean.

INSTRUCTOR: Did you read the biographical sketch?

MISS CAUTHORN: Yes.

INSTRUCTOR: What impression of Browning did you get from it?

MISS CAUTHORN: Well, he was a very energetic sort of person—oh, I see what you mean. You would expect him to write something like *Fra Lippo Lippi* because he's like *Fra Lippo Lippi* himself. But you'd think it would be almost im-

<sup>4</sup> To employ the usual formula: The names used in this article are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance to actual students is purely coincidental!

possible for him to write anything like *Andrea del Sarto*, which is sort of slow and tired and—well—plaintive.

INSTRUCTOR: Exactly. (I like your choice of the word *plaintive*, a very good word for Andrea.) If *Andrea del Sarto* is a greater poem than *Fra Lippo Lippi*—and I personally think it is—part of the explanation may lie at this point: that in portraying a character so unlike himself as the “plaintive” Andrea, Browning was forced to the exercise of a more conscious artistry and thus achieved a more finished production. Mr. Ellis, I can see by your face that you disagree with me.

MR. ELLIS: I think *Fra Lippo Lippi* is a much better poem. I get a clearer picture of that gay old monk talking to the policemen than I do of Andrea whining in his room. I mean I think Fra Lippo comes out more as a real person.

INSTRUCTOR: I'm glad you feel that way, Mr. Ellis. By all means stand up for your preferences. Miss Johnson?

MISS JOHNSON: Parts of it aren't very clear to me. Was Fra Lippo Lippi painting for this lord or something? Was he still living in the monastery or what? I don't understand some of the lines.

INSTRUCTOR: Let's turn to page 174 and see if we can't clear up some of these details for Miss Johnson. The time is after midnight on a fine spring night (note ll. 4 and 45) in the year 1441; the place, “an alley's end” in Florence. The characters are Fra Lippo Lippi, Carmelite monk and painter; and a handful of Florentine guards (or “policemen,” as Mr. Ellis called them). The guards have been going their rounds in the wee hours of the morning and have suddenly stumbled on the truant monk, making his way back to his room. The poem opens explosively with Lippi's vehement protest as the guards seize him and hold up their torches to his face.

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!  
You need not clap your torches to my face.  
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!

What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,  
And here you catch me at an alley's end  
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?

Notice how skilfully Browning suggests the various reactions of the guards. Give me an example, Mr. Ponder.

MR. PONDER: Let's see. The line

Then, you'll take  
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat  
shows that one of the guards has him by the neck. And “Who am I?” (l. 14) suggests that one of them asked him who he was again.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes. Miss Pomeroy?

MISS POMEROY: “Why, sir, you make amends” tells us that the leader of the guards is apologizing to Fra Lippo Lippi.

INSTRUCTOR: Right. Miss Brainerd?

MISS BRAINERD: Line 39, “Yes, I'm the painter since you style me so,” suggests that one of the guards has said, perhaps, “Why, he's the painter!”

INSTRUCTOR: Good! Miss Carpenter, how about line 18—“Boh! you were best!”

MISS CARPENTER: I'm not sure what happens there.

INSTRUCTOR: Mr. Greg?

MR. GREG: I think that's where the guard takes his hand away from Lippi's throat, and the monk says, “You'd better!” or something like that.

INSTRUCTOR: Why does the guard take his hand away suddenly?

MR. GREG: Because Fra Lippo Lippi has just mentioned the name of his patron, Cosimo de Medici, the most powerful man in Florence. The guard doesn't want to hurt a friend of a powerful man like that.

INSTRUCTOR: Exactly. The Medici

family, you remember, ruled Florence for many years. The earlier members of the family, especially, were patrons of art and literature. Mr. Grant?

MR. GRANT: I don't understand why Fra Lippo Lippi has such a hard time remembering Cosimo's name, in lines 16 and 17.

INSTRUCTOR: Oh, I'm afraid you missed the point there, Mr. Grant. Tell him, Miss Strathman.

MISS STRATHMAN: Fra Lippo Lippi is building it up. He knows it will have a terrific effect on the guards to hear the name of this great man and to learn that the monk is staying with him. So he just pretends to be fumbling for the name, just to build up the effect.

INSTRUCTOR: Get it, Mr. Grant?

MR. GRANT: Check!

INSTRUCTOR: What do you think is the purpose of—do you have a question, Miss Johnson?

MISS JOHNSON: What is the meaning of "w-e-k-e" in line 11? Is it Latin? [Laughter.]

INSTRUCTOR: Mouse Latin, Miss Johnson! Fra Lippo Lippi is imitating the squeak of the mouse which he is sardonically bidding his overzealous captors to go and "harry out."

Miss Jansen, what do you think is the purpose of the lines

He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!  
Just such a face!

and

I'd like his face—  
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door  
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave  
that holds  
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair.

MISS JANSEN: I think he's trying to show how observant Fra Lippo Lippi is.

INSTRUCTOR: Is that all? Mr. Leland?

MR. LELAND: Also to show that Lippi tied up his art with people and things

that he saw around him. As I understand it, Fra Lippo Lippi was one of the first of the early Italian painters to paint from life, to be realistic in his painting.

INSTRUCTOR: That's right. This quality of Lippi will be developed more fully farther on in the poem; but here Browning suggests it in a couple of quick strokes.

Well, we must hurry along. The scapegrace monk, having completely subdued his would-be captors, is now in a much better humor ("Lord, I'm not angry!") and feels in the mood to justify his midnight wanderings, to "sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch." First he gives them an immediate explanation: how he had been painting saints and more saints for Cosimo; how he had leaned out of the window for some fresh air; and how the singing, the music, and the "three slim shapes" had proved too much for him. So he had made a ladder out of the "curtain and counterpane and coverlet," let himself down, and joined the fun.

[A student's question as to why Lippi was locked up led to discovery of his taking vows at eight years of age to get bread, and on to his insistence upon painting real people. The instructor asked how this innovation was received.]

MR. CAMERON: At first they praised it without thinking. But then the higher-ups came in and denounced it.

INSTRUCTOR: Why?

MR. CAMERON: Because it was too lifelike. They wanted him to paint souls and forget about the body.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes. Here was one of the main reasons why Browning was attracted to Fra Lippo Lippi. Lippi was one of the first Italian painters to break away from the formal ecclesiastical tradition in which the emphasis was on "spirituality"

in painting rather than on lines and colors and lifelike form. Browning felt in Lippi a kindred spirit; for Browning himself, as a poet, was introducing into English poetry a new realism, a conversational tone, a rough vigor, which were at variance with accepted poetical conventions.

That is why he puts into the mouth of Lippi a defense of "real life." When the Prior points to Giotto as a model to follow and orders Lippi to rub his efforts out and try again, Lippi protests to his hearers:

Now is this sense, I ask?  
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body  
So ill the eye can't stop there, must go further  
And can't fare worse!

What does Lippi have to say about the conflict between soul and body, Miss Bonnet?

MISS BONNET: He doesn't see any. He doesn't see why they can't go together.

INSTRUCTOR: Exactly. Take the Prior's niece; he says, line 209,

Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,  
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,  
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?  
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all  
(I never saw it—put the case the same)—

And then two of Browning's memorable lines:

If you get simple beauty and naught else,  
You get about the best thing God invents.

Finally, Lippi shows that, down beneath all his cynicism and his love of nocturnal frolicking, he has a core of sincere religious conviction:

That's somewhat; and you'll find the soul you  
have missed,  
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.

Well, so his life has gone. And, even though now he is his own master, how does he feel, Mr. Vardeman?

MR. VARDEMAN: He feels that the old boys are still looking over his shoulder

and shaking their heads at his kind of painting.

[There follows a discussion centering upon lines 242-69 and the question of whether one should condemn earthly pleasures as all bad. Lippi's faith in the future of this new mode of art is brought out.]

INSTRUCTOR: Then there comes one of the most significant passages in the poem—significant in its expression of both Lippi's and Browning's attitude toward their art. Miss Tremont, you're a good reader-aloud; read these lines for us—282-306.

MISS TREMONT:

... you've seen the world—  
The beauty and the wonder and the power,  
[and so on to]

They are better painted—better to us,  
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;  
God uses us to help each other so,  
Lending our minds out.

INSTRUCTOR: Very well done, Miss Tremont. Lippi gets quite enthusiastic over this idea. "If I drew higher things with the same truth as I could draw the hanging face of one of your fellows there," he says, "I could interpret God to all of you."

Then there follow three and a half lines which I think express Browning's sturdy optimism and intelligent vigor better, perhaps, than any other lines in all his poetry—with the possible exception of the third stanza of his "Epilogue to Asolando" (which we shall read in a few days):

This world's no blot for us,  
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good—  
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

That would be Browning's answer to the modern Cassandras who see no hope for a despised, depraved human race and who feel, as Carlyle once felt, that the uni-

verse is "one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb." Mr. Bromberg?

MR. BROMBERG: Didn't Browning ever get discouraged over *anything*?

INSTRUCTOR: Of course he did! He got discouraged over the reception of his early poetry. He was deeply saddened by the death of his wife. He was not blind to the evils of the world and of man—few poets have painted for us any more vicious and disreputable characters than has Browning. But he had a core of invincible optimism that would not be soured; and throughout his seventy-nine years he never lost his basic faith in the value of life. He seemed to live on William James's principle: "Believe that life is worth living, and the belief will help to create the fact."

But let's get back to Fra Lippo Lippi. Miss Acheson, how does Lippi answer those who say that the purpose of painting is to remind people to pray or to fast or to go to church?

MISS ACHESON: Let's see—oh, yes, he says that you might as well use a skull and bones or a cross made out of sticks or a ringing bell if that's all you want.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes. And what example does he give of the false purposes that are often imposed on art—or that were in his day?

MISS ACHESON: Something about a painting he did for a cathedral—a painting of St. Laurence being burned; but I didn't understand all of that passage.

INSTRUCTOR: Anybody? Well, he tells the guards of a painting he did in the cathedral at Prato six months ago—a picture, as you say, of St. Laurence being burned to death on a gridiron. When Lippi asked "a brother" how the painting looked, the reply was: "Fine! The faces of the three slaves who are burning

St. Laurence are already unrecognizable because of the mutilations of pious people who have come there to pray in a rage—

Expect another job this time next year,  
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—  
Your painting serves its purpose!"

"Hang the fools!" says Lippi.

At this point Lippi realizes that he has been talking too much. The tangy air has gone to his head, he says. It's only natural that he should try to excuse himself for his escapades.

Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me now!

And suddenly he thinks of a way to make amends for all this loose chatter. And what is that, Mr. Barelli?

MR. BARELLI: He will paint a religious picture.

INSTRUCTOR: Tell us more.

MR. BARELLI: Well, it's for some nuns, and it will be just the kind of picture the nuns will like, with a Madonna and a babe and flowery angels and saints and Job out of the Bible. But he plans to put himself in it, coming up out of a hole, as if he had got into the wrong company. But an angel stands up for him, because, after all, he was the one who painted the picture. None of the rest of them could have done it.

INSTRUCTOR: This picture of Lippi's, "The Coronation of the Virgin," which he did for St. Ambrose's Church in Florence, is a fine example of the mixture of spirituality and realism that you get in Fra Lippo Lippi. I have here a couple of copies of this painting, which I want you to pass around and look at. Note the head and upper half of Fra Lippo Lippi himself, emerging from the lower right-hand corner, and note, too, the scroll with *Iste perfecit opus* on it—"This one did the work." I think you also might be interested in the fact that the model for the Virgin was probably Lucrezia Buti, the

mistress of Lippi! It has been suggested that Browning was led to the subject of Fra Lippo Lippi by seeing this very painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence.

Anyway, this enthusiastic description (Browning delighted in poetical descriptions of paintings) makes a fine ending to a wonderful monologue. Lippi realizes that it is time he is getting back to Cosimo's palace:

Your hand, sir, and good-bye; no lights, no lights!  
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,  
Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning.  
Zooks!

And off he strides through the Italian dawn, with his "old serge gown" flapping in the rising breeze, perhaps singing a gay *stornello* (a short folk song) as he goes. It is with regret, I am sure, that the guards see him leave, for he has been a most stimulating companion. The night has been one that they will not soon forget.

And now we turn to "a twilight piece." We move from the streets of Florence to a single room in Fiesole, a room in which "a common grayness silvers everything." Miss Freeman. . . .

At this point, as the instructor and his students start on a similar analysis and discussion of *Andrea del Sarto*, we shall take leave of our English 40 class.

We do not say that the method described here is the only way to teach the survey—or to study Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi* in a class session. It might be fairly argued that this particular instructor talked too much; that the temper of the class was frequently too frivolous; that too much time was spent on passages which should be perfectly clear;

that not enough background material was presented for the fullest understanding of the poem.

We do believe, however, that the teacher's approach and emphasis were, in the main, sound. He did not sit, like Cato, and give his little senate laws. The students were encouraged to join energetically in their own education. The instructor was a leader, not a dictator. And we are confident that a student group gets much more benefit from frequent interpretations by one of their own number—however crude the effort—than it does from the unrelieved, even though superb, evaluations of the Figure behind (too rarely in front of) the Desk.

Finally, the instructor stuck primarily to the text. A bit of biographical introduction for color; a general comparative handling of the two poems to stimulate thinking and arouse interest; some needed background information now and then; an occasional bypath of humor and comment; but no lengthy lecturing on Vasari, Italian life and art, the careers of the Medicis, Florence in the fifteenth century, the Brownings in Italy, or what-have-you. Here is a poem, a play, a piece of prose. Can the student read it? What does he get out of it? Can a class session of fifty to sixty minutes serve to "bring it home" to him, to make him realize why it is worthy to be included in an anthology?

To repeat and to conclude, we believe that the most effective teaching concoction, with regard to the survey, is a skilful blending of two main ingredients: active student participation in class and what the French would call *explication de texte*. To this basic recipe, of course, the individual teacher will, and should, add his own pet flavorings and special seasonings!

## Report and Summary

### About Literature

TWO AMERICAN POETS HAVE BEEN treated with loving but discriminating analysis in recent issues of two "little magazines." The *Briarcliff Quarterly* devotes the whole of its autumn number to William Carlos Williams, and the *Western Review* inaugurates a series of examinations of modern poets with an excellent critique of the works of John Peale Bishop by Robert Wooster Stallman. The *Briarcliff* prints several of Williams' poems, both old and new, the first chapter of his novel in progress, several critical essays on different phases of his poetry, several photographs, and an epistolary essay by Williams himself, in which his poetic credo emerges in the statement that "the greatest creations, like those of the past in every case, arise from the close tie between the poet and the upsurging (or downsurging) forms of his immediate world."

Stallman considers that the importance of John Peale Bishop is twofold: "because he represents the best in the perfection of the Symbolist style in English" and "because he is, in his own achievement, a minor poet of the first order." He proves his point by examining and evaluating individual poems, and his essay is as important to the teacher for the by-products of its criticism as for the picture it presents of Bishop's techniques.

In reading these two essays, as well as many another which appear in the critical quarterlies, a new help has arrived for the lay reader in the form of Horace Gregory and Marya Zaturenska's *History of American Poetry, 1900-1940*. (See review, p. 336.) This gives an excellent bird's-eye view of what's been going on in American poetry and thus provides focus and background for the more specialized critical essays which,

however wise their content, nevertheless more often than not are written for other critics rather than for the teacher and lover of poetry.

"THE FURY OF WILLIAM FAULKNER" by George Snell also appears in the *Western Review*. The South, and the rest of the country too, Snell feels, treats Faulkner with the same lack of appreciation as was meted out to Poe. Although Snell thinks that his novels alone rank Faulkner as one of the great romantic writers of our time, nevertheless he believes Faulkner's reputation probably will rest upon his great short stories. He discusses the novels briefly and points out that the three aspects of Faulkner's work which tend to alienate the average reader are his recondite narrative method, his pessimistic nihilistic philosophy with its attendant emphasis on the abnormal and subnormal in human behavior, and his ornate, involved prose style. Actually, Faulkner uses the same methods in his short stories, but there is not so much of them, and so they are both less tedious and more overpowering in their effect. Three stories which Snell considers masterpieces are "A Rose for Emily," "That Evening Sun Goes Down," and "The Bear," and these he analyzes at considerable length. "The Bear" (1942), he thinks, announces an entirely new note "in the Faulkner ethos"—one in which "the high sounding words, honor, pity, justice, courage and love, again have a validity and acceptance." But Snell doubts if Faulkner's philosophy will ever be subject to more than superficial change because that "vast, savage and demonic tragedy which he sees life in the south to be is after all the fundamental fructifying principle of his art."

THE NOVELS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF are re-examined and revaluated in an essay by Philip Toynbee in the November *British Horizon*. This inaugurates *Horizon's* new series of critiques on the contemporary novel. Toynbee is particularly concerned with *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *Between the Acts*. He considers Mrs. Woolf primarily "a lyrical poet with a passionate interest in the nature of artistic creation." This intellectual obsession drove her to the novel, and the intellectual content of her novels is always the same. His conclusion is that as statements of the artist's problem the novels are admirable but that they do not themselves constitute a solution of the problem. "They are invaluable textbooks for future novelists, they will be constant sources of poetic delight to all feeling readers. But they are not successful novels."

"CONCERNING DREISER'S MIND" by Woodburn O. Ross in the November *American Literature* discusses the question raised by some critics as to whether or not Dreiser's mind was divided and whether or not he was, as several think, even a mystic. Ross presents evidence which says "No" to both.

AMERICAN LITERATURE ALSO CARRIES an interesting essay on Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* by John B. Hogen. This really is a study of how Matthew Arnold's indictment of American philistinism and cultural mediocrity provided the inner drive in Twain which produced the *Yankee*.

"HEBRAIC LORE IN MAXWELL Anderson's 'Winterset'" by Samuel Klinger should be useful to the many persons who teach this play. Klinger describes the Hebraic lore from which the space-time imagery in the play is derived and shows how this provides the intellectual framework from within which Anderson seeks to project his view of the contrast between abstract justice and its administration in the courts of law. He also shows how it affects Anderson's portrayal of the effort of men, when justice fails, to

wrest something ennobling from defeat and death. This appears in *American Literature*.

"BARKER'S WILD OATS" BY GEORGE Bernard Shaw in the January *Harper's* is an autobiographical account of that dramatist's collaboration with the late Harley Granville-Barker in the first London productions of Shaw's early plays.

THE SOUTH ATLANTIC QUARTERLY for January contains a fresh little biographical essay which will induce a wave of nostalgia for all those who were nurtured in their academic youth on Green's *History of England*. The subject is John Richard Green himself. His biographer is L. M. Angus Butterworth, who, in much briefer space, has done for Green what Margaret Lane recently did for Beatrix Potter. In other words, two writers both specially gifted in characterization are for the first time biographized. Who can forget Peter Rabbit? Who can forget Green's description of Queen Elizabeth? Yet we have known very little of either author. Butterworth reveals that Green suffered all his adult life from tuberculosis, of which he finally died. Yet for eight years he worked as an ordained Anglican clergyman in the slums of London and, moreover, had a wonderful sense of humor. The *History*, with its scholarship and splendid imageries and turns of phrase, was written in physical pain and in Italy, where, like Keats, Green had hoped to find new health.

ROLLO BROWN DESCRIBES "COPEY" of Harvard" in an essay which appears in the January *Atlantic*. A character sketch rather than a biography, this essay makes clear the teaching methods, as well as the personal traits, which made Charles Townsend Copeland one of the most inspiring teachers of literature Harvard has ever had. For those who support the return of "oral reading" it provides excellent ammunition. In both January and December issues of the *Atlantic* are published early letters of Thomas Wolfe which describe in terms which will interest students the problems of the beginning novelist.

## NEW AND INTERESTING "LITTLE MAGAZINES"

*Foreground: A Creative and Critical Quarterly.* Publishes fiction, poetry, and criticism of new and known American and foreign authors. Is "particularly concerned with the discovery of new literary personalities, and is making a special effort to tap the energy and talent at American colleges and graduate schools." Address: 1 Grays Hall, Cambridge 38, Mass.

*Parnassus.* An international literary magazine. Publishes poetry and prose. Address: 473 Yonge Street, Toronto 5, Ontario, Canada. \$2.00 a year.

*Vespers.* Edited by Henry Picola. A quarterly magazine of poetry, edited by a poet. Contributors include Louis Ginsberg, David Cornel De Jong, Harold Vinal, August Derleth, etc. \$3.00 a year; \$0.80 a copy. Address: 966 East Twenty-fifth Street, Paterson 3, N.J.

*Meanjin Papers.* Edited by C. B. Christesen. A literary quarterly. Address: Melbourne University Press. Carlton, N. 3, Victoria, Australia. \$2.00 a year.

*Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture.* Founded in 1940. Published quarterly. Currently edited by Ira De A. Reid. Its name gives the clue to the essential character of this 96-page periodical.

It is a scholarly, literary, thoroughly readable magazine devoted to the subject of "race." Prints fiction, poetry, criticism, biography, and an extensive book-review section under the general title of "The Literature of Race and Culture." Address: Phylon, Atlanta University, Atlanta 3, Ga. \$2.00 a year.

*Theatre Notebook.* A quarterly of notes and research. Address: Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, 12 Lansdowne Road, Wimbledon, S.W. 20, England. 7s. 6d. a year.

*The Editorial Digest.* Outstanding editorials of general interest reprinted complete. Edited by John Drury. Published monthly. Address: R. K. Hess, 43 East Ohio Street, Chicago 11, Ill. \$2.00 a year.

*Folio* (formerly *Living Poetry*). A quarterly magazine of poetry. Address: The Dierkes Press, 1212 Washington Street, La Porte, Ind. \$1.00 a year.

*Western Review* (formerly the *Rocky Mountain Review*). First issue under new name, autumn, 1946. A literary quarterly. Publishes fiction, poetry, criticism. Address: 211 Fraser Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan. Subscription: \$1.50 a year. Single copies, \$0.40.

*About Education*

THE IOWA COLLEGES CONFERENCE on English at its fall meeting voted to affiliate with the National Council of Teachers of English. H. W. Reninger (Iowa State Teachers College) and John C. Gerber (State University of Iowa) were named as the Conference's representatives in the Council's Board of Directors. The officers of this new NCTE affiliate for 1946-47 are: H. W. Reninger, president; Miss Letha Plowman, Washington Junior College, vice-president; and the Reverend John E. Keating, St. Ambrose College, secretary-treasurer. The program for the meeting was focused upon "The Relation of English to

General Education." Dean Earl J. McGrath, University of Iowa, spoke on "The Concept of General Education." Professor Fred W. Lorch, Iowa State College, discussed "The Relations of Freshman English and Speech to General Education"; and Professor Reninger, "The Relations of Contemporary Literature to General Education." Professor Joseph Warren Beach delivered a lecture, "Dead End in American Letters."

"MERCHANTS OF LIGHT" BY L. Ruth Middlebrook in the winter *American Scholar* is a frank and lively discussion of

teaching conditions in American colleges, particularly in departments of English, and the effect these have upon the quality of teaching and upon the quality of education generally. Colleges "produce a society within their own walls which is as severely stratified as a medieval barony," writes Miss Middlebrook. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for an instructor to pass from his rank to professional status." Moreover, she charges, "the lower ranks of instructors are pitilessly exploited and often led on to the destruction of their morale." Miss Middlebrook states specifically the ways in which this is done. Most of us know them. However, Miss Middlebrook describes the process in such a manner as to make clear how the fact that they exist indicates that both the public and many educators in administrative posts have failed to recognize how indispensable higher education is to the immediate welfare of the nation.

"IS TEACHING A PROFESSION?" IS the subject of a long letter to the editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature* (December 28). This, and Miss Middlebrook's essay, are two of the most forthright statements which have appeared as to the causes of the present teacher shortage. The point of view of the letter-writer is that persons are deterred from entering and/or remaining in teaching because it is *not* a profession. *Inter alia* he writes: "We teachers [in public schools] have nothing to do with school policies or educational practice. We are robots, told what to do, and what not to do. No one ever asks our opinion even about our own work. In nearly thirty years, no one ever asked my opinion about any school policy, big or little. Any pick and shovel day laborer has far more control over his professional life than we have." And again: "Too many principalships, superintendencies, su-

pervisorships come off the assembly line of politics. Not enough from successful teaching." College teachers, of course, have more freedom than this, but it is just as well for us to realize that our own problems are paralleled pretty generally in the secondary schools by the situation thus described.

THE COLLEGE CONFERENCE ON English in the Central Atlantic States in a joint meeting with the New York Council of College Teachers of English, held at the Faculty Club of New York University, adopted the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That this meeting deplors the present cheapening of the English instruction in some colleges as a result of oversized classes. For the sake of efficient teaching, every possible effort should be made to hold composition classes, in particular, to twenty students, and under no circumstances should they exceed twenty-five. In a larger class the recitation suffers, and in addition the instructor is unable to read carefully the student's written work and to give him the individual attention in conference which the best professional practice demands. Therefore, we urge the special attention of college departments and administrators to this problem.

KARL J. HOLZKNECHT, *Chairman*  
College Conference on English in  
the Central Atlantic States

WILLIAM G. CRANE, *Chairman*  
New York Council of College  
Teachers of English

THE SURVEY GRAPHIC FOR DECEMBER discusses the general problems of communication under the title, "The Right of All People To Know." Today's developments in communications are carefully examined, as are also the economic restraints at home and the political barriers abroad, both of which hinder the common understanding upon which hangs the fate of everybody everywhere in the Atomic Age.

## Books

### THE KITTREDGE SHAKESPEARE

*Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare*<sup>1</sup> is a collection in one volume of the sixteen plays (T, MAAN, MND, MV, AYLI, TN, RII, IHIV, HV, RJ, JC, M, H, KL, O, AC) edited with introductions and notes by Kittredge and formerly issued separately. The separate origin is still indicated by the printing of the explanatory notes on each play immediately after its text and of a separate glossary for each at the end of the book. This naturally leads to much repetition (there are fifteen entries for "sirrah" and sixteen for "still" meaning "always," but with different citations). The textual notes are grouped together (pp. 1405-63). Each play has its own introduction (from which certain sentences have been abstracted for the complete edition), and Arthur Colby Sprague has provided an informing and discerningly appreciative three pages on Kittredge as a Shakespearean critic and scholar. There is also, as frontispiece, an excellent picture of Professor Kittredge.

It would be impertinent to emphasize the value of this book for all students of Shakespeare. Its clear introductions and notes are what one would expect from the scholarship and sharp discrimination and incisive insight of their author. It is interesting to notice that this last text of Shakespeare continues to employ the misleading eighteenth-century stage directions and that the notes generally disregard Elizabethan stage practice even when it must be considered if the situation is to be intelligible (e.g., RJ, II, i, ii; JC, IV, ii, iii, etc.). In at least one instance (H, I, v) Elizabethan practice is helpfully cited.

Our chief regret must be that its author did not live long enough to record his comments on many more plays.

GEORGE F. REYNOLDS

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

<sup>1</sup> *Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare*, ed. George Lyman Kittredge. Boston: Ginn, 1946. Pp. 1541+x. \$4.75.

### SURVEY OF HISPANO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

This is the late Dr. Henríquez-Ureña's revision and enlargement of his Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard in 1940-41.<sup>1</sup> The task proposed was an ambitious one—a comprehensive survey of Hispano-American literature from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the present day—and its working-out is a marvel of condensed scholarship and criticism. No one was better acquainted with the field than Dr. Henríquez-Ureña; and few—one thinks of Alfonso Reyes and a handful of others—surpass him in sympathetic understanding of this immense body of literature whose lot is all too often either neglect or blanket ballyhoo.

The book is a literary history, a kind of primer; that is to say, the necessary skeleton of things, the framework upon which criticism and speculation may be built. Naturally, in the attempt to cover so long a period in so short a space, there is little room for elaboration; but one is constantly being surprised by the number of details that the author does manage to include, especially in his remarkably full and rewarding notes—an armory of bibliographical information, or anecdote, and of suggestions for further investigation. Nor (what one might have expected) is the contemporary scene neglected; there is no thorough discussion of it, but most of the significant writers of today are mentioned, at least in the notes, and the lively and frequently combative tendencies which they represent are succinctly described. The most serious omission, from the contemporary point of view, is the lack of any comment upon the important role played by the artists exiled from Fascist Spain. Mexico, especially, is a literary center as significant as any that now exists, and the contribution of the many anti-Franco

<sup>1</sup> Pedro Henríquez-Ureña, *Literary Currents in Hispanic America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945. Pp. 345. \$3.50.

Spaniards who have taken refuge there is not to be underestimated. But with this exception, the book is eminently satisfactory: an authoritative compendium, a valuable guide.

DUDLEY FITTS

PHILLIPS ACADEMY

## EXPLORING THE MODERN WORLD<sup>1</sup>

The attractive title of this book of freshman readings is somewhat misleading. Although about ten of the sixty-one selections are translations from foreign authors and some of the others explore the landscape and national problems of far corners of the globe, the book has no special tie with world literature or international issues. The "world" that it explores would seem to be rather the intellectual world of the modern man, in which political, scientific, or artistic provincialism is dangerously outmoded. Each of the articles is intended to stimulate thinking in one field of modern knowledge, and together they skim over a great deal of ground.

The editors have tried to survey five phases of the modern world: its geography, its races, the organization of its society, its science, and its arts and culture. Their book does not pretend to be comprehensive in any of these areas, but rather its purpose is to toss out some thought-provoking studies within each. For teachers who want a full basis for class discussion of a wide variety of contemporary problems, this text is one of the best.

The actual authors represented are highly miscellaneous, as in all books of freshman readings, and few are of literary importance or enduring worth. The book is seasoned with some famous names out of the past—Goldsmith, Columbus, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Tacitus (*Customs of the Germans*) W. H. Hudson, Hardy (*The Three Strangers*), Aristotle, Sir Thomas More, Hawthorne, Darwin, H. G. Wells (*The Man Who Could Work Miracles*), Longinus, Arnold,

<sup>1</sup> Floyd Stovall, Leo Hughes, and Haldeen Braddy, *Reading around the World*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1946. Pp. 738. \$2.75.

Whitman, and Daudet—but their entries are generally short and were obviously used because these particular utterances suited the general plan. The emphasis is a practical one upon ideas rather than literary qualities or traditional reputation.

Some teachers will welcome a book of readings that explores modern life without overemphasizing politics or social studies. No political line is consistently developed, but several are represented. Willkie, Wallace, and Max Lerner are here, but there is no insistence on liberal indoctrination. The editors are highly noncommittal on Russia, with David Dallin's "*Klyukva*" and Ernest Simmons' *Russia and Western Culture*.

Each of the five sections ends with three or four short stories, ingeniously chosen to illustrate the place of one phase of our "world" in everyday life. Thus, *Glaciers* by Vladimir Lidin suggests the elemental influence of the physical world in man's emotional experience. Clara Laidlaw's *Little Black Boys* gives a human application of the racial problems that have just been scientifically discussed, but Saki's *The Background* has a connection with art almost too nominal to make much sense.

The book has little study apparatus—outlines of three of the articles and twenty pages of questions at the end that look toward themes. The brief biographical introductions are undistinguished and include some gratuitous misinformation, such as that Saki chose his "nomme [*sic*] de plume" from "the name of a Japanese rice beer: sake." An enthusiast for the modern cinema and the Russian Eisenstein will be surprised by the statement that "although an American can say little in favor of the casting or direction of the Soviet motion pictures sometimes shown in New York and elsewhere, he must admit that Ilf and Petrov's criticism of Hollywood is in large measure wholly [*sic*] justified." But this is quibbling about a generally conscientious collection of serious and unhackneyed selections from a wide variety of contemporary sources.

ROBERT WARNOCK

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

## Brief Reviews

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

### FOR THE GENERAL READER

*Lydia Bailey.* By KENNETH ROBERTS. Doubleday. Pp. 488. \$3.00.

Time, 1800, with a background of United States history and an inspiring love story. The author says that the fictional characters are composites of men and women who took part in this history-making period. The hero, Albion, is led to Haiti, France, and Tripoli. Nonfictional characters are largely based upon their own letters. These include many famous names: Tobias Lear, General Eaton, Toussaint L'Ouverture, and many others. (At one point the writing of *Lydia Bailey* was laid aside while the author and his wife translated a manuscript by Moreau de St. Méry, and published in French, containing much authentic and unusual information about early New York and Philadelphia, of historical importance in the story of Lydia Bailey.) Nearly 500 pages. End maps.

*The Angelic Avengers.* By PIERRE ANDREZEL. Random. \$3.00.

Two innocent, lovely, eighteen-year-old girls are suddenly thrown upon a coldhearted nineteenth-century London world. Soon the scene changes to France. What promises to be a sweet story of love suddenly changes to a horror story worthy of Poe. We feel sure virtue will triumph over evil, but we are fascinated by the eerie course of the story. Written under pseudonym, with a mystic quality and distinction (Isak Dinesen?).

*The Quarry.* By MILDRED WALKER. Harcourt. Pp. 407. \$3.00.

Lyman Converse, whose father owned a good soapstone quarry, was too young for the Civil War, but his son took part in World War I. The story opens with the underground railroad and Easy, an escaped slave boy who chose to remain in the Vermont valley with Lyman's father—a just man. Easy became Lyman's lifelong friend. This is a story of what came after the Civil War, of boys killed and girls frustrated, of a new West and the old South. "Love desires that which is absent and beyond his reach," young Lyman read from Plato and thought Plato crazy. But Lyman came in his long life to know how right Plato was. There is a bit of symbolism in the title.

*The Wanderer.* By ALAIN-FOURNIER. Translated by FRANÇOISE DELISLE. Introduction by HAVELock ELLIS. New Classics. Pp. 306. \$1.50.

A story of two schoolboys in a French provincial town and of a weird adventure. The young author was killed in the first World War. The story has had eighty printings.

*Grand Central.* By DAVID MARSHALL. Whittlesey. \$3.50.

A picture of the behind-the-scenes life and the intricate system which brings order out of a very possible chaos of trains coming and going at the Grand Central Station. Drama—movement—people. Illustrated.

*The Rise of Henry Morcar.* By PHYLLIS BENTLEY. Macmillan. \$3.00.

A long novel with a background of textile industry in Yorkshire, an industry in which Miss Bentley's people have been engaged for generations. The hero is a poor boy who became a prosperous industrialist. His personal life was tragic, but he never lost his ideals. Possibly the author thinks of Morcar as England.

"Dear Fatherland, Rest Quietly." By MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE. Simon & Schuster. \$3.00.

A warning, both in text and in photographs, by a very trustworthy and wise writer who visited Germany shortly after the war ended and found nazism only sleeping—not dead.

*Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House.* By ERIC HODGINS. Simon & Schuster. \$2.75.

For those who have built and those who are about to build. It all seemed so simple when the architect estimated the building of the house would cost \$10,800. After \$58,000 had been spent and a lawsuit was pending, the *writer* can be witty and hilarious about it. The reader may think it funny if it is not too personal.

*The Thresher.* By HERBERT KRAUSE. Bobbs-Merrill. Pp. 548. \$3.00.

A remarkably realistic, well-written story. Johnny Schwartz, an orphan, grew up with a narrow-minded, frustrated aunt, who kept his father's past constantly in his mind. Johnny wanted power, and he wanted to own a threshing outfit. He came to hate the narrow, fanatically religious German community of this wheat-growing Minnesota district in the mid-nineteenth century. The characters are remarkably real; Johnny's frustration has a touch of universality. Unfortunately, the book is long—but what could be omitted?

*In the Hands of the Senecas.* By WALTER D. EDMONDS. Little, Brown. Pp. 213. \$2.00.

The scene is laid in 1778. End maps with notations: "Where a white man's scalp brought \$8.00." . . . "Here General Butler with Tory and Indian forces fought General Sullivan's army." It is a story of good and bad Indians, of cabins

burned, of men scalped, of women and children prisoners taken on a "Bataan March" back to the villages of the Senecas, and, in particular, of one woman's bravery and valor.

*New Guinea Headhunt.* By CAROLINE MYTINGER. Macmillan. Pp. 441. \$4.00.

An exciting adventure story of two young American women who went to New Guinea to paint portraits of Papuans, an early type of man rapidly becoming extinct. They were fortunate in the types they secured for portraits: one a genuine headhunter, one an authentic witch. The anthropological information is valuable. They were caught in many dangerous situations and suffered from tropical diseases. End maps and many illustrations. A fascinating book of the islands that make news.

*Small Town.* By GRANVILLE HICKS. Macmillan. Pp. 276. \$3.00.

For the many people who live in big cities and dream of quiet village streets this will prove a new treatment of small-town life—no Friendship Village (Zona Gale, remember?) stuff. Mr. Hicks approaches his subject as an "intellectual"—there are few of his kind in the town. He did not shirk his duty as an intellectual—he took part in the politics, the church, school, and library work, even became a member of the fire department. He tried to find out what made people tick, what made "Sammy run," and found he was the wiser for it. But many readers will miss the coziness of most small-town-life stories.

*The Best American Short Stories, 1946.* Edited by MARTHA FOLEY. Houghton Mifflin. Pp. 586. \$3.00.

With the *Yearbook of the American Short Story*. The Foreword is very informative. Miss Foley points out the "coming-of-age" of the short story of the last year. While the short story has always been popular in America, more were published in 1946 than ever before. To most of us the cheerless themes that have been chosen and the new writers are important, although the stories, Miss Foley emphasizes, were judged by their literary standards and not by their subject matter. In no other way can a reader become so quickly aware of new writers (not too promising, perhaps), their interests, and the literary subject matter which appealed to writers and the public in 1946.

*Leo Tolstoy.* By ERNEST J. SIMMONS. Little, Brown. Pp. 790. \$5.00.

"I clearly realized that my biography if it suppressed all the nastiness and criminality of my life—as they customarily write biographies—would be a lie, and that if one is going to write my biography, one must write the whole truth" said Tolstoy. In a Preface Mr. Simmons speaks of the new manuscripts and material which have become available in the last twenty years. There are many illustrations and a

family tree. The first chapter tells of family "Princes, Generals, and Scoundrels." Nearly eight hundred pages about Leo Tolstoy follow. In an early chapter is related the story of the "Green Stick," an episode in his childhood when Tolstoy first learned love—not love for one person or for things but an all-embracing love. Very readable, thrilling, and inspiring.

*The Making of a Southerner.* By KATHARINE DU PRE LUMPKIN. Knopf. \$3.00.

"My greatgrandfather, William Lumpkin, at his death had 21 children, 1200 or more acres of Georgia land and many slaves. Moses was valued at \$825." With her family history in mind, the author has made a frank, honest, perceptive study of the influences that have shaped her life and the lives of southerners in general. Her northern education and long residence there have modified her perspective. She does not minimize the problems of the South.

*Shelley: A Life Story.* By EDMUND BLUNDEN. Viking. Pp. 388. \$3.75.

The English poet, critic, editor, and scholar has used facts learned since 1940; he has written a vivid life-story of Shelley and of the men and women who helped shape his life and his poetry. While he places great emphasis upon the character of the poet, he presents him as a less visionary and ethereal man than we have believed him to be. A moving story, well told.

*How To Read the Bible.* By EDGAR J. GOODSPEED. Winston. Pp. 244. \$2.50.

Dr. Goodspeed comments upon our dismay at the bulk of the Bible and the range and variety of its books. The most interesting do not stand at the beginning. Therefore, we should take a literary and historical approach to it, taking up the chief books in it as biography, oratory, history, poetry, drama, fiction, letters, visions, etc. His first chapter is "Where To Begin." He begins with chapter i, "Biographies"; chap. ii, "Speeches, Orations, Sermons," and follows with other chapters, twenty-three in all.

#### FOR TEACHER AND STUDENT

*English Literature in the Earlier 17th Century, 1600-1660.* By DOUGLAS BUSH. Oxford. Pp. 621. \$7.50.

Brilliant, witty, and sound critical scholarship. The first volume to appear in the "Oxford History of English Literature," edited by F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée. About 170 pages of valuable bibliography.

*A Critical History of English Poetry.* By HERBERT J. C. GRIERSON and J. C. SMITH. 1st Amer. ed. Oxford. Pp. 593. \$5.00.

Two great scholars here collaborate in writing a history of twelve hundred years of English poetry

with the aim of giving a true perspective of that poetry and of stimulating a sounder understanding of its nature.

*A History of American Poetry, 1900-1940.* By HORACE GREGORY and MARYA ZATURENSKA. Harcourt. Pp. 524. \$4.00.

A conjugal literary collaboration by two American poets. Their intention in writing this history is "humane rather than humanitarian," and their interest is in the work of the individual writer rather than in literary movements. This is the first comprehensive account of twentieth-century American poetry to appear. It presents a clear bird's-eye view of what has been going on.

*Prefaces to Shakespeare, Vol. I.* By HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER. Princeton University Press. Pp. 543. \$5.00.

The first volume in the American edition of Granville-Barker's famous critical essays on the plays of Shakespeare. Includes the book-length *Hamlet* and four shorter prefaces on *King Lear* (this section is significantly changed from the earlier English edition), *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*.

#### FOR THE STUDENT

*Of Time and Truth.* Edited by FRED W. LORCH, W. PAUL JONES, and KEITH HUNTRESS. Dryden Press. Pp. 594. \$3.00.

A new kind of book of readings which emphasizes ideas and values first and form second. Selections range from Plato to *Time*. All are presented in relation to the nine general issues discussed: How far can science go? Can racial equality be achieved in our country? What education is best in a democracy? Is progress a delusion? How free should expression be? To what extent should the individual conform to conventions? Can rebellion against authority be justified? What are our objectives in life? The aim of the authors has been, to show that these problems are not just contemporary but that they have exercised thinking men and women throughout history, and to help students evaluate their own experiences in the light of the material presented.

*Social Insight through Short Stories.* Edited by JOSEPHINE STRODE. Harper's. Pp. 285. \$3.00.

An anthology of twenty-six short stories, both British and American, of recognizable literary merit, assembled for the purpose of providing sup-

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*A Student's Guide to English Composition.* By R. D. SCOTT. Harper. Pp. 561.

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*College Compositions.* By RICHARD SUMMERS and DAVID L. PATRICK. Ronald. Pp. 294. \$2.50.

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*Preface to Critical Reading.* By RICHARD D. ALTICK. Holt. Pp. 321. \$1.60.

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*Extemporaneous Speaking.* By J. M. O'NEILL. Harper. Pp. 418. \$2.75.

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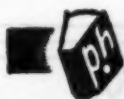
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